CARS THAT LAST FOR 200,000+ MILES | THE DANGEROUS CHEMICALS IN FAST FOOD WRAPPERS | QUICK FIXES FOR CLUTTER

MAY 2022

CR Consumer Reports®

RATINGS & REVIEWS

- Air Fryers
- Microwaves
- Smartwatches
- Insect Repellents
- Wood Flooring
- Bike Helmets

WHERE TO GET

Rx DRUGS FOR LESS

Online pharmacies offer amazing deals on common meds, like the generic version of Lipitor (one month's supply)

$13.99* COSTCO

$3.90 MARK CUBAN COST PLUS DRUG CO.

$3.00 HONEYBEE

$9.90 HEALTHWAREHOUSE.COM

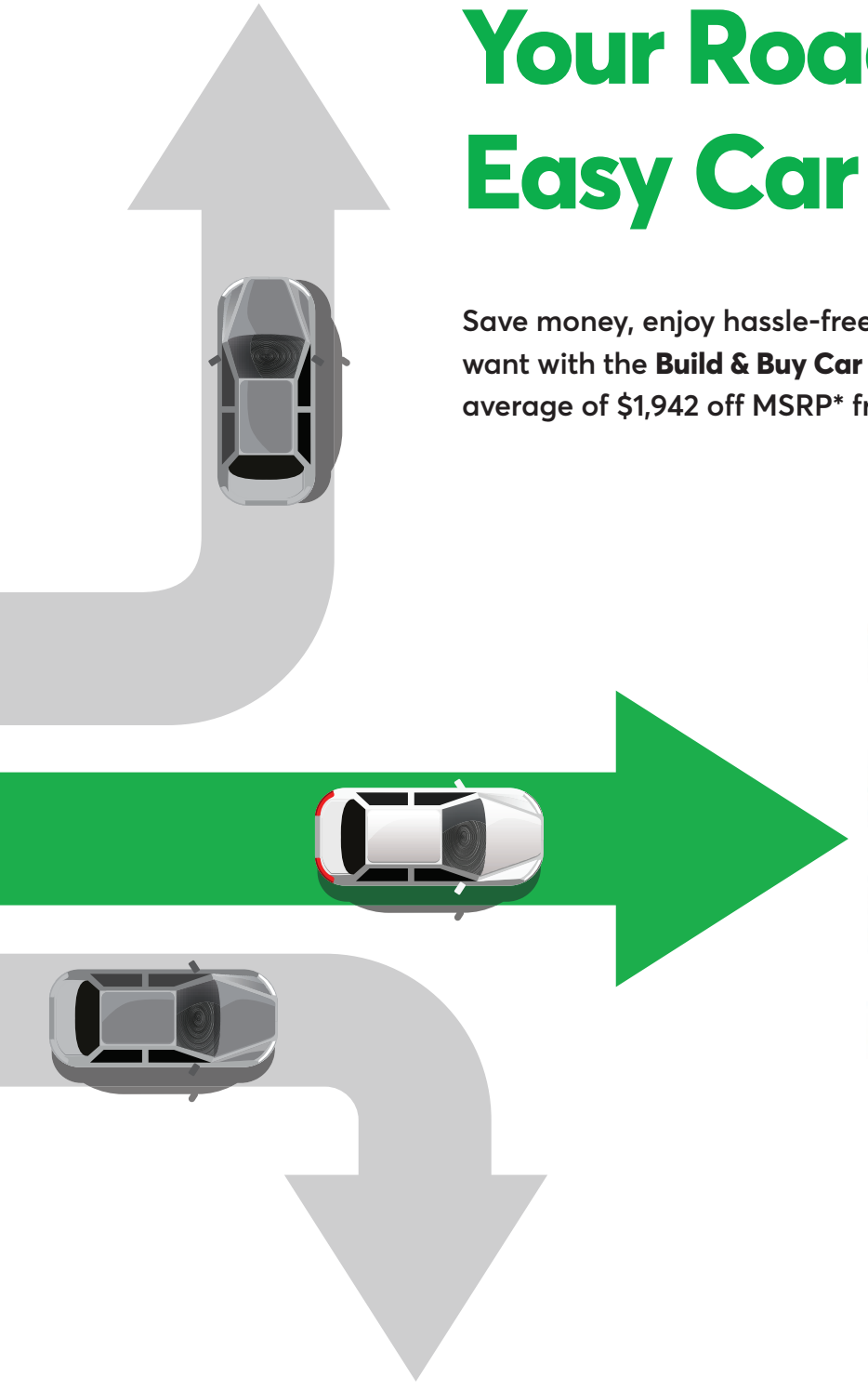
$0.54* SCRIPTCO

$14.60* AMAZON

*with annual membership

Your Road Map to Easy Car Shopping

Save money, enjoy hassle-free shopping, and get the deal you want with the **Build & Buy Car Buying Service.** You'll save an average of $1,942 off MSRP* from a nationwide dealer network.



SEARCH for the car you want and see what others paid

LOCATE the dealership from our prescreened network of over 15,000

COMPARE real pricing from participating dealers

SAVE and drive home your car and your savings!

cr.org/buildandbuy

*Between 1/1/21 and 12/31/21, the average savings off MSRP experienced by consumers who connected with a TrueCar Certified Dealer through the Consumer Reports Build & Buy Program and who were identified as buying a new vehicle from that Certified Dealer was $1,942. Your actual savings may vary based on multiple factors, including the vehicle you select, region, dealer, and applicable vehicle-specific manufacturer incentives, which are subject to change. The MSRP is determined by the manufacturer and may not reflect the price at which vehicles are generally sold in the dealer's trade area, as many vehicles are sold below MSRP. Each dealer sets its own pricing.

CR

Contents

MAY 2022, VOL. 87 NO. 5

Get Meds for Less
We compared prices of common generic drugs at online pharmacies and found some very good deals out there.

P. 22

22 **Save Big on Rx Drugs!**
Many online pharmacies offer common meds for even less than you'd pay with insurance. We reveal where to get the best deals.

30 **Goodbye, Mess: Quick Ways to Organize Your Stuff**
Clean up your home's trouble spots with these smart strategies and products.

36 **The Dangerous Chemicals in Your Fast Food Wrappers**
We found PFAS–chemicals linked to serious health risks such as cancer and lowered immunity–in the papers and bowls holding your takeout food.

44 **Best Credit Cards to Have Now**
If you've been carrying around the same cards for years, you might be leaving money and other perks on the table. Here's the latest on the right credit cards to carry.

PRODUCTS RATED IN THIS ISSUE

MICROWAVES
P. 8

INSECT REPELLENTS
P. 9

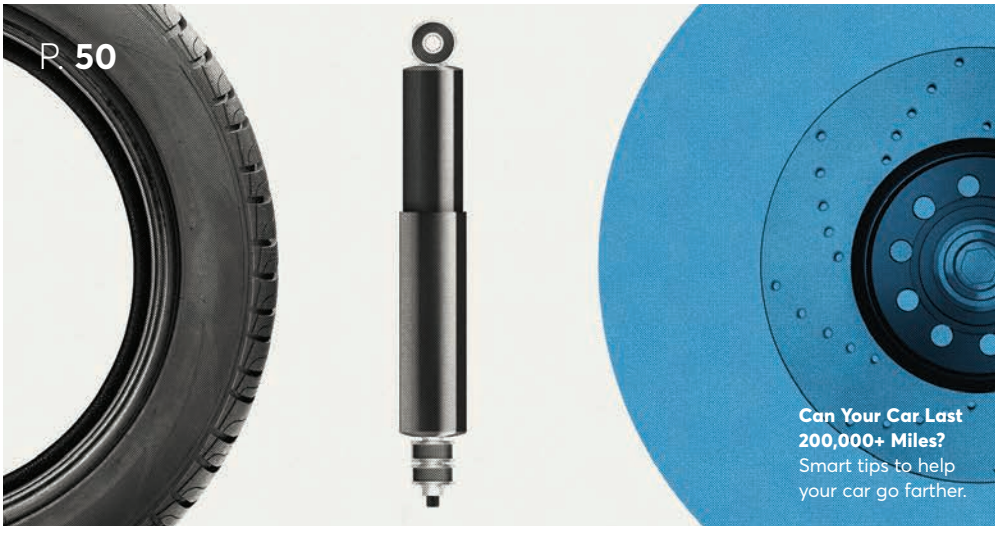
CLEANING TOOLS
P. 11

PET GPS TRACKERS
P. 15

VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI
P. 57

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY SINELAB

Contents



DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

8 **What We're Testing in Our Labs ...**
Smartwatches, wood flooring, microwaves, insect repellents, and more.
RATINGS

10 **Ask Our Experts**
Are frozen vegetables less likely to give you food poisoning? Plus, the best ways to "unfriend" someone on Facebook, and the accuracy level of at-home COVID-19 tests.

11 **CR Insights**
We test spring-cleaning tools for carpets and patios, the tastiest boxes of chocolates, great online florists to order from, and more.
RATINGS

PRODUCT UPDATE

18 **Top-Rated Air Fryers From Our Tests**
They're a staple on many American countertops. We share the models and features to look for.
RATINGS

IN EVERY ISSUE

4 **From the President: The Fight Against PFAS**
We're calling on the government to limit the use of PFAS—the chemicals found in thousands of consumer products.

5 **Building a Better World, Together**
We're working toward safer food, more stringent vehicle emissions, and effective recalls of dangerous infant products.

6 **Your Feedback**
Readers' comments about our recent content.

17 **Recalls**

60 **Index**

61 **Selling It**

ROAD REPORT

49 **Ahead of the Curve**
Auto ratings, news, and advice.

50 **How to Make Your Car Last 200,000+ Miles**
Advice for keeping your beloved car on the road for as long as possible.
RATINGS

56 **The Benefits of Driving Hybrids**
Why hybrid owners are more satisfied than those with gas-only cars.
RATINGS

57 **Road Test**
We rate the Audi A3, Honda Civic Si, Toyota Corolla Cross, and Volkswagen Golf GTI.
RATINGS

ABOUT CONSUMER REPORTS
Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit organization founded in 1936 that works side by side with consumers to create a safe, fair, and transparent marketplace. To achieve our mission, we test thousands of products and services in our labs each year and survey hundreds of thousands of consumers about their experiences with products and services. We pay for all the products we rate. We don't accept paid advertising.

In addition to our rigorous research, investigative journalism, and consumer advocacy, we work with other organizations, including media, consumer groups, research and testing consortiums, and philanthropic partners. We also license our content and data, as well as work with business partners to offer shopping and other consumer services, and may receive fees from these programs. We maintain a strict separation between our commercial operations and our testing and editorial operations. Our testing and editorial teams decide which products to test and review; our external business partners or other third parties do not dictate or control these decisions. Lastly, these partnerships and programs do not constitute CR's endorsement of any products or services.

For more information, go to **CR.org/about.**

HOW TO REACH US
Write to us at Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703, Attn.: Member Support.
Or call 800-333-0663.

TO SEND A LETTER TO THE EDITOR
Go to **CR.org/lettertoeditor.**

FOR NEWS TIPS & STORY IDEAS
Go to **CR.org/tips.**

For **Selling It** send items to **SellingIt@cro.consumer.org.** See page 61 for more details.

ACCOUNT INFORMATION
Go to **CR.org/magazine** or call 800-333-0663. See page 3 for more details.

RATINGS Overall Scores are based on a scale of 0 to 100. We rate products using these symbols:

POOR FAIR GOOD VERY GOOD EXCELLENT

Receive Secure Income From a Trusted Partner.

"I want to make sure that my wife and I have enough to live comfortably now and into the future."

John has trusted CR for years for its fact-based information. He has established Charitable Gift Annuities to receive tax-advantaged lifetime payments.

John Swanson, PhD, retired business owner and award-winning engineer, with his wife, Janet, animal welfare activist

How a CGA Might Work

Age	Donation Amount	Tax Deduction	Annual Payment (for life)	Tax-Free Portion of Payment
72	$30,000	$13,829	$1,470	$1,116

This is not legal advice. Consult a qualified estate and/or tax professional to determine the consequences of this gift.

To receive more information or a detailed brochure, contact Nancy Smith at **877-275-3425** or **legacy@consumer.org**

☐ **Yes,** I want to learn more about creating a Charitable Gift Annuity.

☐ **Yes,** I am interested in learning about other opportunities such as a gift in my will or making CR a beneficiary of part or all of my retirement accounts or life insurance policies.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

_____

Email _____

Phone _____

Date(s) of Birth _____

I am thinking of donating $ _____ to establish a CGA.

(Minimum $10,000)

Return to: Consumer Reports Planned Giving
101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703

Consumer Reports is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Contributions to Consumer Reports are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Our U.S. tax identification number is 13-1776434.

LEGACY CR SOCIETY

CRM25ASN

CR Consumer Reports®

Member Support You can call us about your membership or donations at **800-333-0663.**

Or go to CR.org/magazine to • Renew or pay for your current magazine • Give a gift • Change your address • Report a delivery problem • Cancel your magazine

Or write to us: Consumer Reports Member Support P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298 Please include or copy address label from issue. (Allow four to six weeks for processing.)

Price In U.S., $6.99 per issue, special issues $7.99. In Canada, $7.99 CAN per issue, special issues $8.99 CAN (Goods and Services Tax included, GST #127047702). All other countries add $10 per year to the U.S. price for shipping and handling.

Back Issues Single copies of previous 12 issues, $8.99 each; previous year's Buying Guide, $14.49 (includes shipping and handling). Please send payment to Consumer Reports, Attn.: Member Services, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703. Other ways to get Consumer Reports on the go: Apple News+, Google Play, Kindle, Nook, Readly, and Zinio.

Permissions Reproduction of Consumer Reports in whole or in part is forbidden without prior written permission (and is never permitted for advertising purposes). For questions about noncommercial, educational/academic uses of our content, please submit requests to **CR.org/licensing.**

Mailing Lists We exchange or rent our print postal mailing list so that it can be provided to other publications, companies, and nonprofit organizations that offer products or services through direct mail. If you wish to have your name deleted from our list, please send your address label with a request for deletion from outside use to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298. We do not exchange or rent email addresses. You can review our complete privacy policy regarding Consumer Reports information products, services, and programs at **CR.org/privacy.**

Consumer Reports (ISSN 0010-7174) is published monthly, except twice in December, by Consumer Reports, Inc., 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703. Periodicals postage paid at Yonkers, N.Y., and at other mailing offices; Canadian postage, at Mississauga, Ontario (Canadian publications registration number 2665247, agreement number 40015148). Title Consumer Reports is a federally registered trademark in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

Contents of this issue copyright © 2022 by Consumer Reports, Inc. All rights reserved under international and Pan-American copyright conventions.

CR's No Commercial Use Policy To view the policy, go to **CR.org/nocommercialuse.**

Contributions Consumer Reports is an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that works side by side with consumers to create a fairer, safer, and healthier world. Contributions are tax-deductible in accordance with the law. Donations of commonly traded securities or real estate will be accepted and immediately converted to cash. For additional information, email **donorservices@cr.consumer.org.** To donate, please send your tax-deductible contribution to Consumer Reports, Attn.: Donor Services, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703 or go to **CR.org/donate.**

Charitable Gift Annuity Establishing a Consumer Reports Charitable Gift Annuity is an ideal way to accomplish your personal financial goals while supporting the mission of Consumer Reports. For additional information, please contact us at 877-275-3425 or **legacy@consumer.org.**

Consumer Reports' Staff operates under contract between Consumer Reports and The NewsGuild of New York Local 31003, CWA.

Members Send address changes to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298. If the post office alerts us that your magazines are undeliverable, we have no further obligation to fulfill your magazines unless we have a corrected address within two years.

POSTMASTER Send all UAA to CFS (see DMM 507.1.5.2).

NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES Send address corrections to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 2109, Harlan, IA 51593-0298.

CANADA POST If copies are undeliverable, return to Consumer Reports, P.O. Box 481, STN MAIN, Markham, ON L3P 0C4.

Consumer Reports is a member of Consumers International, a federation of more than 220 consumer organizations from more than 115 countries working to protect and empower consumers throughout the world. For information, go to **consumersinternational.org.**

Please Remember CR in Your Will For information about how to make a bequest to Consumer Reports, please contact us at 877-275-3425 or **legacy@consumer.org.**

The Fight Against PFAS

OUR LIVES have changed during the pandemic, and we're only starting to grasp some of the less obvious impacts. For example, many of us stopped eating at restaurants and opted instead for takeout meals. In fact, 62 percent of Americans are now more likely to get takeout than before COVID-19, according to the National Restaurant Association. And aside from the sheer waste created by all those takeout containers, we now know that they could also contain potentially dangerous chemicals.

You may have heard of PFAS (pronounced PEA-fahs), short for per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances. These chemicals can be found in countless products, including nonstick pans and waterproof jackets, as well as takeout containers. They're linked to some serious health concerns, such as lowered immunity and various types of cancer. CR's tests (see page 36) confirmed that some burger wrappers, salad bowls, and baking cups at popular chains and supermarkets contain concerning amounts of these chemicals. They're also in our water, with one study finding that more than 200 million Americans likely have PFAS in their drinking water. Another CR test found that even bottled water can contain PFAS.

While we offer tips to help you to minimize your personal exposure, you can't avoid PFAS altogether. What's needed now is for companies to voluntarily stop using them in their food packaging. Our government should establish strong limits on their use. And consumers must speak out. You can start by signing our petition asking fast-food companies to halt the use of PFAS in packaging, at **CR.org/PFASpackaging**, and by calling on lawmakers to pass the bipartisan Keep Food Containers Safe from PFAS Act, at **CR.org/PFASact**.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of Rachel Carson's book "Silent Spring," about the dangers of reckless pesticide use. The public outcry it triggered led to federal legislation and helped launch the Environmental Protection Agency. Six decades later, let's take action on the next silent threat of PFAS.

Marta Tellado

Marta L. Tellado,
President and CEO
Follow me on Twitter
@MLTellado

CR Consumer Reports®

President and CEO Marta L. Tellado

Senior Vice President, Chief Operating Officer Leonora Wiener
Vice President, Chief Content Officer Gwendolyn Bounds

Editorial Director, Print Ellen Kunes
Deputy Editors, Print Amanda Lecky, Diane Umansky, Natalie van der Meer

Design Director Mike Smith **Creative Director, Brand** Young Kim
Art Directors Tammy Morton Fernandez, Ewelina Mrowiec
Photo Editors Lacey Browne, Emilie Harjes, Karen Shinbaum

Senior Director, Content Development Glenn Derene
Deputy Director, Content Development Christopher Kirkpatrick
Associate Directors, Content Development Scott Billings, Althea Chang-Cook
Enterprise Kevin Doyle, Editor; Perry Santanachote, Writer/Reporter
Senior Director, Content Impact & Corporate Outreach Jen Shecter
Special Projects Joel Keehn, Director; Margot Gilman, Associate Director; Lisa L. Gill, Rachel Rabkin Peachman, Brian Vines, Deputies; Ryan Felton, Scott Medintz, Writers
Editorial Director, Digital Erle Norton
Senior Director, Product Testing Maria Rerecich
Associate General Counsel Camille Calman
Director, Lab Operations Lilian Kayizzi

CARS: ***Editors/Writers:*** Keith Barry, Jeff S. Bartlett, Jonathan Linkov, Mike Monticello, Benjamin Preston ***Auto Test Center:*** Jake Fisher, Senior Director; Jennifer Stockburger, Director ***Product Testing:*** Michael Bloch, Steve Elek, Kelly Funkhouser, Gordon Gingras, John Ibbotson, Alex Knizek, Anita Lam, Ryan Pszczolkowski, Mike Quincy, Gabriel Shenhar, Shawn Sinclair, Emily A. Thomas, Joe Veselak, Jenson Yuen

HEALTH & FOOD: Lauren F. Friedman, Content Lead ***Editors/Writers:*** Trisha Calvo, Kevin Loria, Catherine Roberts ***Policy Lead:*** Brian Ronholm

HOME & APPLIANCE: Sara Morrow, Content Lead ***Editors/Writers:*** Tanya A. Christian, Jennifer Cook, Mary Farrell, Keith Flamer, Paul Hope, Liam McCabe, Deb Silber, Tobie Stanger, Daniel Wroclawski ***Product Testing:*** John Galeotafiore, James Nanni, Testing Leads; John Banta, Susan Booth, Tara Casaregola, Lawrence Ciufo, Enrique de Paz, Bernard Deitrick, Cindy Fisher, Paolo Fu, Kathleen Halevah, Rich Handel, Misha Kollontai, Ginny Lui, Joan Muratore, Joseph Pacella, Christopher Regan, Frank Spinelli, Dave Trezza ***Market Analysts:*** Mark Allwood, Kelly Moomey, Courtney Pennicooke, Antonella Pomilla, Marion Wilson-Spencer

MONEY: ***Editor/Writer:*** Penelope Wang

TECH: Jerry Beilinson, Content Lead ***Editors/Writers:*** Octavio Blanco, Nicholas De Leon, Thomas Germain, Yael Grauer, Melanie Pinola, Chris Raymond, Allen St. John, Kaveh Waddell, James K. Willcox ***Product Testing:*** Richard Fisco, Glen Rockford, Michael Visconti, Testing Leads; Elias Arias, Antonette Asedillo, Steve Blair, Claudio Ciacci, Charles Davidman, Cody Feng, Bill Fitzgerald, Fred Garcia, Henry Parra, Richard Sulin, Maurice Wynn ***Market Analysts:*** Min Kim Bryant, Cesar Carroll, Odalys Grieco, Nish Suvarnakar ***Policy Lead:*** Justin Brookman

Chief Scientific Officer James H. Dickerson
Product Sustainability Shanika Whitehurst, Associate Director
Food Safety James E. Rogers, Director; Tunde Akinleye, Amy Keating, Sana Mujahid
Product Safety Ashita Kapoor, Associate Director; Juan A. Arguello

Content Operations Robert Kanell, Director
Copy Editing Leslie Monthan, Copy Chief; Noreen Browne, Alison France, Wendy Greenfield
Fact Checking & Research David Schipper, Associate Director; Tracy Anderman, Sarah Goralski, Christine Gordon, Karen Jacob, Jamison Pfeifer
Planning & Production Nancy Crowfoot, Associate Director; Eric Norlander, Manager; Letitia Hughes, Terri Kazin, Aileen McCluskey
Premedia William Breglio, Associate Director; Eugene Chin, William Hunt, Anthony Terzo

Photography John Powers, John Walsh
Imaging Francisco Collado, Mark Linder

Chief Research Officer Kristen Purcell
Consumer Engagement Testing Charu Ahuja, Director; Linda Greene, Dana Keester, Paul Ritchey
Statistics & Data Science Debasmita Das, Kristen Dorrell, Dina Haner, Keith Newsom-Stewart
Survey Research Karen Jaffe, Simon Slater, Associate Directors; Noemi Altman, Dave Gopoian, Kendra Johnson, Debra Kalensky, Martin Lachter, Jane Manweiler, John McCowen, Adam Troy, Tian Wang, Tess Yanisch

Consumer Insight Frank Yang, Associate Director; Ipsita Arora
Member Support Sue Melfi, Director; Donna Murianka
Marketing Dawn Nelson, Senior Director
Procurement Operations Steven Schiavone, Associate Director
Administration Dawn Yancy Elleby

VICE PRESIDENTS: **Chief People Officer** Genea O. Bell; **Financial Planning & Analysis** JoAnne Boyd; **Chief Digital Officer** Jason Fox; **Chief Strategy Officer** Jessica Freireich; **Advocacy** David Friedman; **New Products & Services** Esther Han; **General Counsel** Michael Hubner; **Research, Testing & Insights** Liam McCormack; **Chief Diversity Officer** Rafael Pérez; **Chief Marketing Officer** Lauren Stanich; **Community & Corporate Engagement** Sharee McKenzie Taylor; **Chief Social Impact Officer** Shar Taylor; **SVP, Chief Financial Officer** Eric Wayne

PHOTO: MELANIE DUNEA

Making Cars More Efficient

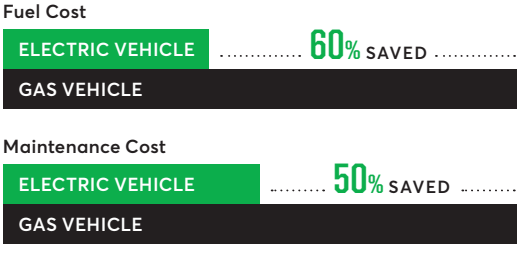
Drivers in the U.S. will save thousands of dollars, and we'll all enjoy improved air quality, because in December the Environmental Protection Agency finalized more stringent emissions standards for new cars and light trucks.

CR was one of many groups urging the EPA to reestablish standards at the same level as those set in 2012, which were rolled back in 2020. We took the lead in providing data and analysis on the consumer costs and benefits of stronger rules, showing that they would save consumers an average of $2,400 over the life of each new car, starting in 2026.

We also objected to an earlier proposal, arguing that it included too many loopholes for automakers. We submitted over 25,000 petition signatures in support of the stronger rules and rallied CR members to testify at public hearings.

The final rule delivers almost all of what CR asked for, putting the U.S. on a path to a 60 percent reduction in new vehicle greenhouse emissions by 2030—and saving consumers more than $1 trillion in fuel and maintenance costs, even after accounting for higher initial technology costs, through 2050.

WHAT EVs SAVE COMPARED WITH GAS-POWERED VEHICLES



ILLUSTRATIONS: JOHN RITTER

UPDATE: BABY SLEEPERS

In April 2019 Fisher-Price recalled almost 5 million Rock 'n Play Sleepers, triggered in large part by a CR investigation that eventually uncovered nearly 100 infant deaths linked to the product. But records obtained by CR this year indicate that only about 8 percent of the recalled sleepers had been accounted for by the end of 2020. CR is now calling on Fisher-Price to redouble its efforts to get the sleepers out of homes. We're also pushing for legislation that would require companies to devote more resources to recalls and improve how they notify the public about them.

Striving for Safer Food

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Roughly 1 in 6 Americans gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from foodborne diseases each year, according to estimates by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Careful food handling by home cooks can help, but food producers and regulators must do more to minimize harmful bacteria in the U.S. food system.

HOW CR HAS YOUR BACK

CR has worked long and hard to make the food you buy safer to eat. One of our tools is lab testing. In January, for example, CR found E. coli O157:H7 in a package of Kroger-branded ground beef purchased in late December in Seattle. The discovery, part of our larger, ongoing effort to test ground meat purchased across the nation, prompted a recall of 28,365 pounds of ground beef. No illnesses have been reported to date.

More broadly, we're pushing to address regulatory shortcomings that put consumers at risk. One reason the recent beef recall was effective: In the 1990s the Department of Agriculture declared E. coli O157:H7 an adulterant–a status that triggers an immediate recall if the pathogen is found. By contrast, poultry processors can legally distribute their products even if they're known to contain dangerous bacteria, such as salmonella. So CR is urging the USDA to establish a zero-tolerance policy for the most dangerous strains of salmonella.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Follow best practices when handling meat and poultry at home. You can read about safety tips, and sign up to get CR's food safety alerts via text message, at **CR.org/foodmistakes.**

Source: "Electric Vehicle Ownership Costs: Today's Electric Vehicles Offer Big Savings for Consumers," CR Advocacy report, October 2020.

Our February article **"How to Get the Sleep You Really Need"** offered expert advice for getting your nightly rest. And CR readers chimed in with some smart sleep tips of their own. To join the conversation, go to **CR.org/bettersleep**.

MY TRICK FOR falling asleep is listening to podcasts about sports, as well as audiobooks on history and other nonfiction [topics]. I use comfortable in-ear headphones at a low volume, with an off timer set for about 30 minutes. For me, Apple's wired EarPods block just enough sound and don't become irritating.
–Aaron Isgar, Honolulu

DON'T COUNT SHEEP, instead count backward by 3 from 300. It can require some persistence, but I've had nearly 100 percent success getting to sleep or back to sleep. It's really amazing how effective this is in turning off an overactive mind.
–David Dornbusch, Ithaca, NY

YOUR ARTICLE ON sleep was very helpful but missed one important option: using meditation apps. I use a free one called InsightTimer, and I know there are others. If you go to Sleep on the home page, they offer a list of categories such as Sleep Music and Bedtime Stories. I use sleep meditations, which includes a wide variety of guided meditations that help slow my busy mind. I also use them if I have trouble going back to sleep in the middle of the night.
–E. Patrick Fuerst, Moscow, ID

IN YOUR RECENT article you had several suggestions. I tried and/or use them all. I have an additional one I want to share that has been the most important for me: flipping my alarm clock down. When having trouble sleeping, I would often look over at my clock, which always made it worse, no matter what time it was. 2 a.m.? Man, I am only going to get 4 hours, best-case scenario. 4 a.m.? Ah, shucks; what's the point of even trying to sleep now? With my alarm facing down, if I wake up, I just tell myself that it doesn't make a difference what time it is. It's still dark out, and my alarm will tell me when to get up. It's such a small thing that has helped me get out of my head.
–Kevin Lang, Denver

EARPLUGS AND A sleep mask were not suggested as aids to assist with some sleeping problems. Being a light sleeper, I experienced difficulty falling asleep and remaining asleep when night shift work dictated sleeping during daylight hours. (My apartment happened to be near a children's playground.) One of my colleagues suggested a set of wax earplugs to block out the noise. I gave them a try and slept undisturbed all day. I have used them ever since and have tried many types as well (wax, foam, silicone).
–Robert Ketcheson, Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

WRITE

Go to CR.org/lettertoeditor to share your comments for publication.

DARK CHOCOLATE

THANK YOU FOR "Is Dark Chocolate Really Good for You?" (February 2022) highlighting the problem of exploitation in the cocoa industry. I refuse to buy major-label chocolate [brands that] won't guarantee their cocoa beans are not harvested using child slave labor. I try my best to be a conscientious consumer. I try to be cognizant of what the end result of my purchases might be. Keep up the good work.
–Paula Evensen, St. Louis Park, MN

I'VE HEARD DARK chocolate contains caffeine, sometimes in significant amounts. I'm surprised this article does not mention that. I would like to see a comparison study of different brands.
–Joel Metzger, via CR.org

EDITOR'S NOTE *Dark chocolate does contain caffeine but in relatively small amounts. An ounce of chocolate with 70 to 85*

percent cacao has about 23 mg of caffeine. (So a 2-ounce bar would have about 46 mg.) Compare that with an 8-ounce cup of coffee, which contains about 100 mg. According to the Food and Drug Administration, most healthy adults can safely consume 400 mg of caffeine per day.

YOUR ARTICLE ABOUT chocolate did not mention any significant health hazards, but how significant is [the heavy metal] cadmium in dark chocolate? Are cadmium warnings valid?
–William Keller, Camp Hill, PA

EDITOR'S NOTE *Some research has found that dark chocolate may contain cadmium. A 2017 study by FDA researchers found that the average cadmium level in the dark chocolates they tested was 7.7 mcg per ounce. While there's no daily limit in the U.S. for cadmium intake, the European Food Safety Authority recommends no more than 1.12 mcg per pound of body weight per week. Based on the study's average, a 180-pound person who ate 5 ounces of dark chocolate a week would be consuming 19 percent of the European weekly limit for cadmium. If you're concerned by that amount, consider reducing your consumption.*

I READ WITH great interest your article on dark chocolate. I have preferred dark (85 percent cocoa and higher) for most of my adult life. My favorite brand was not mentioned in the ratings: Kroger's Private Selection 85% dark chocolate. It's creamy, with intense chocolate flavor. It's made in Switzerland using Rainforest Alliance cocoa. Best of all, it's $1.79 for a 3.5-oz. bar.
–Marian Herz, Boise, ID

BETTER CELL PHONE PLANS

IN THE FEBRUARY 2022 article "The Best Cell Plan Deals for Everyone," you did not mention that some of the big three providers have better coverage in some areas of the country than others, and that needs to be taken into consideration when looking at plans and providers. As an example, in my area of the country, Verizon has much better coverage, etc. than the other two major carriers.
–Tim Eggertsen, Omaha, NE

EDITOR'S NOTE *Coverage can vary from place to place, so we recommend that you ask neighbors who use the service you're considering if they're happy with the reception in your town. Or better yet, invite them over for a cup of coffee and then ask them to place calls from inside your home to confirm that their provider's coverage is good.*

I WOULD LIKE to share one more option that has saved me money over other plans. Anyone who has Xfinity Internet is eligible to sign up for mobile service (Xfinity Mobile). On this plan, I have unlimited talk and text, and pay for data. Since my husband and I are on wireless most of the time, we can share data on a "pay as you need" basis. This change reduced our bill from $122/month to an average of less than $18/month for both lines. They also offer an unlimited data plan, competitive with other carriers.
–P. King, Conroe, TX

RE: "MORE ACCESSIBLE Broadband," what about satellite internet? You [say] that 25 percent of the folks you surveyed [without a broadband connection] state that it is not available where they live. Satellite is available anywhere, and I checked one source that prices it at $59 per month with no installation charge. Why should the government be shelling out money for something that is already available or competing with private companies?
–David Morgan, Southport, NC

EDITOR'S NOTE *Satellite internet service typically has the slowest speeds. And some of the lowest-rated internet providers in our annual ratings are satellite companies, with generally worse scores for value, reliability, speed, and technical support. Satellite service suffers from interruptions from weather and won't work with VPNs for added security. It tends to be a last resort for people unable to get fixed broadband in their area. There's some hope that new, low Earth-orbiting satellite internet, such as SpaceX's Starlink, will improve this option, but right now it costs $499 to purchase the equipment, plus $99 per month for the service.*

DOES DECAF TEA BOAST THE SAME HEALTH BENEFITS AS REGULAR TEA?

In the February 2022 issue, the Food IQ™ article on "The Healthiest Tea for You" caught my eye. I regularly drink tea but use a decaffeinated black tea to avoid the caffeine. Are the health benefits of decaffeinated tea similar to those of regular tea?
—John Morrison, Chapel Hill, NC

EDITOR'S NOTE
Decaf black and green teas have fewer antioxidant compounds than caffeinated ones (though they still have some). For example, decaffeinated black tea has about 80 percent fewer theaflavins and about 40 percent fewer thearubigins—the main antioxidants found in black tea—than regular tea does. And decaf green tea has 62 percent less of the powerful antioxidant EGCG than the caffeinated version.

CONNECT WITH US

FACEBOOK
fb.com/consumerreports
fb.com/SomosCR

YOUTUBE
/consumerreports

INSTAGRAM
@consumerreports

TWITTER
@consumerreports
@SomosCR

PINTEREST
/consumerreports

LINKEDIN
/company/consumer-reports

ILLUSTRATION BY JASON SCHNEIDER

What We're Testing in Our Labs ...

In our 63 labs, we continually review and rate products. Here, timely picks for this month.

Bike Helmets

WE TESTED: 50 models
WE TEST FOR: The helmet's ability to absorb the impact of a crash, how easy it is to adjust the fit of the helmet, how well ventilated it is, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 71
Range: 37-85

EXCELLENT VENTILATION
Giro Register MIPS
$65

85 OVERALL SCORE

REMOVABLE VISOR & WASHABLE INNER PADDING
LEM Boulevard
$40

81 OVERALL SCORE

EASY TO ADJUST FOR FIT
Freetown Lumiere
$40

80 OVERALL SCORE

Microwaves

WE TESTED: 77 mid-to-large-sized countertop models
WE TEST FOR: How quickly, quietly, and evenly it heats and reheats food, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 66
Range: 33-89

SPEEDY HEATING
Panasonic NN-SN77HS
$220

88 OVERALL SCORE

VERY EVEN HEATING
Hamilton Beach P11043ALH-WTB
$100

80 OVERALL SCORE

SLEEK & QUIET BARGAIN
Oster OGCMDM11S2-10
$100

74 OVERALL SCORE

Ask Our Experts

The inside of my microwave has burn marks. Should I replace it?

YOU MAY NOT need to. Burn marks happen when metals (including eating utensils and even aluminum foil) are placed inside a microwave. That's because metals interact with the microwaves and can lead to sparks, causing burns. Interestingly, turning on an empty microwave (which you might do by mistake while trying to use the timer) can also cause burn marks. "With nothing inside, there are no [water molecules] to excite, so the unit can overheat," says Chris Zeisler, technical service supervisor at Repair Clinic, a website. Minor burn marks on the interior usually won't keep a microwave from functioning, but if you see a hole or the coating is peeling, it's time for a new unit.

ILLUSTRATION: SERGE BLOCH

For the latest ratings of these and other product categories, readers with a Digital or All Access membership can go to **CR.org**.

Smartwatches

WE TESTED: 27 models that work with iOS and Android.
WE TEST FOR: How easy it is to use key features like the messaging and calendar apps, how well the display resists scratches, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 77
Range: 60-84

EASY TO USE & TRACKS 90+ DIFFERENT SPORTS
Citizen CZ Smart
$395

84 OVERALL SCORE

DURABLE, SCRATCH-RESISTANT SCREEN
Fitbit Versa 3
$230

81 OVERALL SCORE

NICE PRICE & LONG BATTERY LIFE (14 DAYS)
Amazfit GTR 2
$150

81 OVERALL SCORE

Insect Repellents

WE TESTED: 37 sprays and pumps
WE TEST FOR: How effectively it protects against mosquitoes, whether it stains clothing, and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 58
Range: 4-95

TOP-NOTCH PROTECTION
Ben's Tick & Insect Repellent Wilderness Formula Pump (3.4 oz.)
$6

95 OVERALL SCORE

GOOD VALUE
3M Ultrathon Insect Repellent8 (6 oz.)
$11

94 OVERALL SCORE

LESS LIKELY TO STAIN CLOTHING
Repel Lemon Eucalyptus Insect Repellent2 (4 oz.)
$5

90 OVERALL SCORE

Solid Wood Flooring

WE TESTED:
11 prefinished models
WE TEST FOR: How well flooring resists dents, scratches, and fading from UV rays; how slippery flooring is when wet; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 42
Range: 35-71

RESISTS DENTS & SCRATCHES
Teragren Portfolio
$7.50 per sq. ft.

71 OVERALL SCORE

REDUCES SLIPS AT A NICE PRICE
Lumber Liquidators Bellawood Character Red Oak 10047316
$6.30 per sq. ft.

69 OVERALL SCORE

DOESN'T FADE IN SUNLIGHT
Hartco Paragon Original Ember SAKP59L401
$7.50 per sq. ft.

68 OVERALL SCORE

Best Buy Strollers

WE TESTED:
25 traditional models
WE TEST FOR: How easy it is to use, including adjusting the safety harness, folding, and unfolding; how well it maneuvers; and more.

ABOUT THE SCORES:
Median: 75
Range: 49-88

TOP VALUE & STEERS EASILY
Britax B-Lively
$250

83 OVERALL SCORE

NARROW & LIGHTWEIGHT
Mountain Buggy Nano
$220

80 OVERALL SCORE

PRICE INCLUDES AN INFANT CAR SEAT ATTACHMENT
Graco Verb Click Connect Travel System*
$190

80 OVERALL SCORE

Note: *We rate different products according to different testing protocols; as a result, Overall Scores of one product category are not comparable with another. *The Overall Score is only for the stroller.*

COMING NEXT MONTH Blenders & More

It seems like there have been a lot of food poisoning outbreaks from fresh produce. Is it safer to buy frozen vegetables?

THE OVERALL RISK of getting sick from properly handled produce—fresh or frozen—is low, says Sana Mujahid, PhD, manager of food safety research and testing at CR. But both types have been involved in outbreaks of illness due to salmonella, listeria, and other bacteria in recent years. Produce can be contaminated at the farm during harvesting, or while being packaged at a processing plant. And even though most frozen vegetables undergo an additional process of being blanched in hot water or steamed before freezing, they may still contain bacteria. Those at highest risk for food poisoning—young children, the elderly, and people who are immunocompromised—may want to cook their veggies, which kills bacteria. Staying informed can minimize your risk, too. Sign up for CR's Food Safety Alert at **CR.org/foodalert**, which will send you text messages about multistate food outbreaks or recalls.

LEARN

We have more than 140 in-house experts who research, test, and compare. Submit your questions at CR.org/askourexperts ... and watch for the answers.

I've heard that at-home COVID-19 tests aren't accurate. True?

"AT-HOME ANTIGEN TESTS are quite accurate, especially if you have symptoms when you take them," says Nathaniel Hafer, PhD, an assistant professor in molecular medicine program at the UMass Chan Medical School in Worcester, Mass. Though different brands of rapid antigen tests on the market have different levels of accuracy and can vary in real-world use, several are above 90 percent accurate when used by a symptomatic person, according to test manufacturer data compiled by the Medical Letter, a publication for physicians. The tests, however, are more likely to return a false negative if you're infected with COVID-19 but don't yet have symptoms. That's because the test might not detect the smaller amount of the virus in your body, typical of an early or waning COVID-19 infection.

When testing at home, keep your area's infection rates in mind, too: When COVID-19 infection rates are very low in your area, a positive result on an antigen test is more likely to be a false positive, according to a 2021 research review. When COVID-19 is running rampant in your area, the risk is greater that a negative result on an antigen test could be wrong. So if your antigen test is negative but you think you've been exposed or you aren't feeling well, it's best to avoid being around others, and consider confirming that negative result with a PCR test—which is highly accurate and usually takes one to two days for a result.

Can I unfriend someone on Facebook without them knowing?

WHEN YOU UNFRIEND a person, they won't be notified, but you'll disappear from their friends list and they won't be able to see your private posts. If you've been out of touch with that person, they might not notice. But they'll still be able to look up your profile (just like any other nonfriend Facebook user) and send you a message or friend request, depending on your privacy settings. If you no longer want a friend to be able to see your profile or contact you at all, you can block them. That person won't get an alert, but they'll be able to figure it out pretty easily, says CR tech reporter Yael Grauer, because they won't be able to find your profile or message you. (You won't be able to see the profile you've blocked.) Keep in mind that if you want to unblock that person, you won't automatically be friends again; you'll need to send a new friend request.

If you're just tired of seeing a friend's posts, you may prefer to unfollow them instead of unfriending or blocking them. Unfollowing a friend prevents that person's posts from appearing in your feed, but the person won't know that they've been unfollowed. You'll still be friends on Facebook, so you can still view their profile and posts when you wish, and they can still view yours. To unfollow, click the three dots in the top right corner of the person's post in your newsfeed and select "Unfollow."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY SERGE BLOCH

CR Insights

Hoover PowerDash Pet FH50700 $100
69 OVERALL SCORE

Stained carpets? This cleaner scrubs a mix of water and detergent into your carpet, then vacuums up the water and dirt. It removed red clay stains well in our tests and, at 17 pounds, is lighter than many other models.

IN THE KNOW

SPRING CLEANING MADE WAY EASIER

WANT YOUR ANNUAL cleanup to be a breeze this year? Our experts share their favorite tools (all top recommended and CR Best Buys), giving you the most powerful anti-dirt arsenal for the least money. These product picks and quick tips will help you clear out that winter dust and debris from carpets, kitchen floors, patios, and more.

Kenmore 200 Series BC4002 $250
76 OVERALL SCORE

This vacuum excels at removing embedded dirt from carpets and picking up pet hair—one of the hardest things to banish. Plus, you can easily adjust the pile height with a foot pedal.

Toro 51624 $65
81 OVERALL SCORE

The top-rated, budget-friendly Toro works beautifully to clear away debris and grime from patios. It's easy to handle, and has more than one speed setting for better control in tight areas.

For Pet Hair
Dampen rubber gloves with tap water, then run over couches and curtains to pick up hair and lint.

For Smelly Microwaves
To stop odors, add ¼ cup of lemon juice to a small bowl of water (roughly a cup). Microwave on high for 1 minute. Steam should fill the microwave, which helps loosen splatter stains, too.

For Sticky Fingerprints
Dampen a soft microfiber cloth with tap water to remove fingerprints from TV and phone screens, as well as stainless steel appliances. Rub gently in small circles.

ILLUSTRATIONS: RODRIGO DAMATI; PHOTO: JOHN WALSH/CONSUMER REPORTS

FOOD IQ™

THE TOP BOX OF CHOCOLATES

BUYING FANCY CHOCOLATES can feel like a gamble: You hope to unwrap pretty treats that also taste great, but you might get a not-so-yummy selection of confections instead. To help you find chocolates that taste as good as they look, our staffers sampled nine popular and new-to-the-scene boxed brands between $10 and $50. Whether you're buying these as a gift or just treating yourself, these four won't disappoint.

EDITOR'S PICK

Dandelion Chocolates Single-Origin Truffle Collection
$50 for 15 confections

CR'S TAKE Rich, complex choices decorated with a delicate gold print arrayed in an elegant box: These are a chocolate lover's dream. San Francisco-based Dandelion sources its own cocoa beans (from places such as Colombia and Madagascar), which the company says gives it greater control over the quality of its product. Rather than flavored fillings, these chocolates are all ganaches, meaning the insides are smooth mixtures of chocolate and cream.

COLORFUL & TASTY

Formosa 9 Bonbon Box
$36 for
9 confections

CR'S TAKE These are almost too pretty to eat (but we did anyway!). Our tasters were wowed by the incredible presentation of shapes and colors in this box. Take a bite and you discover the coatings are eggshell-thin, revealing delicious fillings and stunning flavors. We especially liked one bonbon that was shaped like a tiny coffee cup, filled with an airy, coffee-flavored ganache.

UNIQUE, SOPHISTICATED FLAVORS

Vosges Exotic Truffle Collection
$34 for
9 confections

CR'S TAKE The Vosges' box of chocolates offers cool, experimental flavor combinations such as absinthe with coconut, dark chocolate with ginger and wasabi, and white chocolate with olive oil. Two things: You'll need to eat these quickly because they have a shelf life of just 14 days, and they should be stored in your refrigerator.

CURATE YOUR OWN BOX

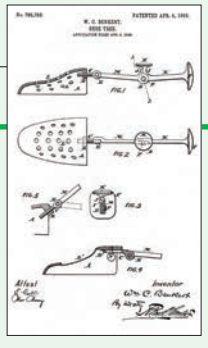
Theo Chocolate Custom Confection Box
$25 for
12 confections

CR'S TAKE Theo chocolate is sophisticated (read "less sweet") with more traditional fillings, such as cherry, hazelnut, mint, and caramel. (Six of the 10 confections we tasted were caramel-based.) You can also choose the flavors you want to include in each box, unlike some of the other brands, which offer a predetermined mix.

IMAGES, BOTTOM LEFT TO RIGHT: CONSUMER REPORTS; PEPPERELL; CHON KIT LEONG/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO; CONSUMER REPORTS; MARIE KONDO; JASON LEE; CONSUMER REPORTS

CR Time Traveler ORGANIZING

1905 William C. Benkert patents the "shoe tree"—a wooden structure designed to hold the shape of your shoes when they're not on your feet.



1947 Adjustable-height shelving is an exciting convenience in fridges, but only two of the 12 new models we test actually have them, including this GE, below.

1954 New bed sheets made of nylon are selling out across the U.S. Our tests find that they're both comfy and durable. Another plus: When folded, they take up a fraction of the space cotton sheets do.

1964 CR tests and likes the Dymo Home Labelmaker, which creates custom labels on plastic tapes. These can then be affixed to storage boxes, tools, jars, and more.

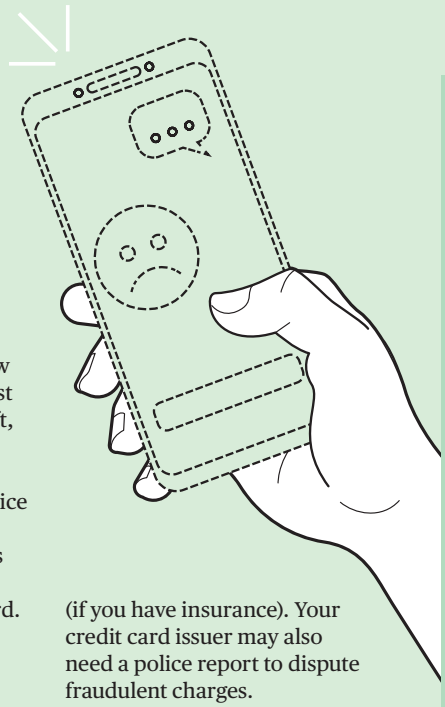
1978 The Container Store, now a popular national retailer devoted to helping people organize, is founded in Dallas.

POOR EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED CR BEST BUY

PHOTOS, OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: DANDELION CHOCOLATES; ANGELA LASHBROOK/CONSUMER REPORTS. THIS PAGE, BOTTOM PRODUCT ILLUSTRATION: T.M. DETWILER

TECH UPDATE

Lost Your Phone? Here's What to Do



THE SOONER YOU ACT, the better your chances of retrieving your phone or securing your data.

STEP 1: Call the phone ASAP. Call or text your phone from someone else's phone and listen for the ring/ping. If you don't hear it, and if you've previously enabled a Find My Phone service, log into it from a secure device, such as your laptop. Use these services to make your phone play a loud sound, which may help you or others locate it. You can also remotely lock the screen and have it display a number to reach you at.

If you're worried that the phone might fall into the wrong hands, there's also an option to erase the data on it remotely. Wiping the phone means you'll lose any photos stored locally on the device, but you will still have access to anything you synced to your computer, iCloud, or other cloud storage service.

STEP 2: Report the loss to your service provider. Let your mobile carrier know that your phone has been lost or stolen. If you suspect theft, the provider can suspend service, thus preventing someone from using the device on its network. It may also be able to mark the phone as unusable—even with a new carrier or a different SIM card.

STEP 3: Change important passwords. Use your computer to log in to every account you had on your phone and change your passwords. Start with your email account and the financial and shopping accounts that have your credit card on file, such as Amazon or your bank, and quickly move on to social networks.

STEP 4: Notify the police. Reporting your loss to the police launches an official recovery attempt and can speed up the insurance claim process (if you have insurance). Your credit card issuer may also need a police report to dispute fraudulent charges.

STEP 5: If you recover the phone, consider wiping it. You never know what malicious app or spyware someone may have installed while the phone was gone (especially if returned days later by someone you don't know). Use the "Reset Everything" option in your Settings. Before you wipe it, though, check your computer or cloud service to make sure that you have copies of your photos and videos.

3 WAYS TO SAFEGUARD YOUR PHONE NOW (BEFORE IT'S LOST)

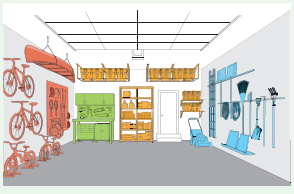
Add a password
Even if you unlock your phone using facial recognition or your fingerprint, you should also add a strong password. Go to CR.org/strongpass for tips.

Enable 'Find My Phone'
These services can help pinpoint on a map where a lost phone is hiding. Make sure that location tracking (GPS) is also turned on.

Know your phone's unique ID number
A smartphone has a special serial number etched into its circuits. When you report a stolen phone to police, you may be asked for this number. To find your ID number, look in Settings or dial *#06# from your phone. The number should pop up on the screen. Write it down and store it in a safe place.

1981 We test top-loading washing machines—the most popular kind sold—and note that many provide a smooth top, ideal for folding clothes.

2003 Marie Kondo starts her tidying business at the age of 19 in Tokyo. Today, her book "The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up," (Ten Speed Press, 2014) is a best seller in the U.S.



2022 Our experts tackle seven clutter challenges, including messy closets, junk drawers, and paper piles. Turn to page 30 for more smart organizing helpers, like these bins.

1996 CR staffers assemble closet organizing kits, then test their strength. A big surprise: The $50 Storage Pride particle board kit is just as strong as the $400 professionally installed kit made by the Closet Factory.

2015 We share tips on how to organize an overstuffed garage, including the best way to mount tools to the wall for a neater workstation.

Clear Weathertight Totes $13

SAVVY SHOPPER

What That $55 Bouquet Really Looks Like

GORGEOUS FRESH FLOWERS delivered to your doorstep: That's the promise of online floral delivery services, a $5.3 billion industry in the U.S. But are you (or your special someone) receiving a bouquet as fab as the one pictured on the website? To find out, we ordered floral arrangements priced at $55 or less from six popular services to be delivered to CR staffers across the U.S. Our goal was to judge whether the bouquets look like the ones pictured online. We also considered the ease of the ordering and delivery process, and how much you're charged once all additional fees are added in.

WHAT THE WEBSITE SHOWS

WHAT WE RECEIVED

EDITOR'S PICK

Rose Goes Bouquet From Farmgirl Flowers

Initial price: $55; **Total price:** $87 ($25 shipping, plus tax)

CR'S TAKE Our recipients were wowed by Farmgirl Flowers. The blooms themselves mirrored what was on the website (they arrived wrapped in wax paper and a burlap cloth inside a spacious box; the order did not include the vase pictured here). The arrangements we received had both blooms and buds, which meant that they lasted for well over a week as the flowers opened up each day.

WHAT THE WEBSITE SHOWS

WHAT WE RECEIVED

PRETTY & MOSTLY FRESH

The Unicorn From UrbanStems

Initial price: $55; **Total price:** $76 ($15 shipping, plus tax)

CR'S TAKE We bought two "The Unicorn" bouquets and had them sent to different locations (they arrived in a box; the order did not include the vase pictured here). Both looked reasonably similar to the website's photo in presentation and color—though one bouquet arrived fresher than the other. The first bouquet arrived in excellent condition and lasted for well over a week and a half. The second bouquet arrived in relatively good shape but with one slightly brown rose. By Day 2, more brown edges appeared on other flowers in the second bouquet, and by Day 6 the roses were almost all wilted.

WHAT THE WEBSITE SHOWS

WHAT WE RECEIVED

DISAPPOINTING DISPLAY

Warm Welcome Bouquet 'Deluxe' From Proflowers

Initial price: $47; **Total price:** $67 ($13.98 shipping, plus tax)

CR'S TAKE These flowers, which we ordered with a vase by selecting the "deluxe" option, looked far less lush than the ones shown on the website, and came with a slightly smaller glass vase. What's more, a few of the roses were slightly discolored, torn, or wilted, and both bouquets came with one flower that had a broken stem. Neither bouquet lasted longer than five days before becoming too wilted and brown to be displayed.

PHOTOS, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FARMGIRL FLOWERS; CONSUMER REPORTS; URBANSTEMS; CONSUMER REPORTS; PROFLOWERS

For reviews of more floral delivery services, go to CR.org/flowerdelivery.

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

GPS Pet Trackers

WANT TO GIVE your dog more time outdoors this summer—either in your yard or off-leash? You may want to try a pet tracker, which can relay your pet's whereabouts in real time to your smartphone. Most pet trackers, which attach to your dog's collar, allow you to create a "safe zone" around the perimeter of your home, so you'll be notified if your dog leaves that zone—handy if your pet has been known to hop the fence. Some trackers also let you designate "danger zones" (nearby busy streets, for example) and alert you if your dog goes near them.

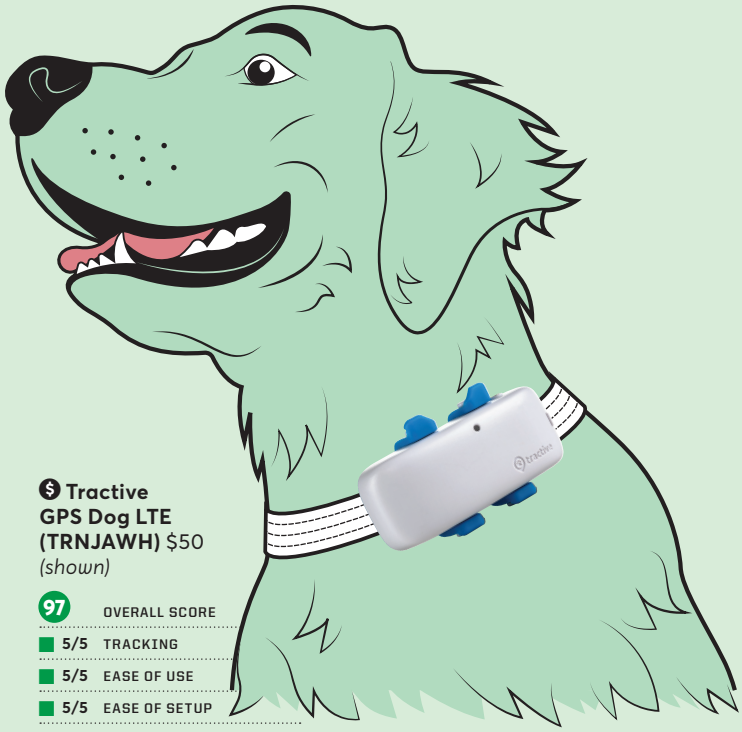
Another benefit: Many of the devices double as a fitness tracker, helping you set and achieve daily exercise goals for your pet based on its breed, weight, and age.

The CR lab team tested seven pet trackers, evaluating their tracking ability, ease of setup (including installing and connecting the app), and ease of use (how easy they are to charge and attach to a dog's collar). In addition to our lab testing, we had a dog owner spend several weeks using all of the devices to track his dog. Here's what we found.

› **It's worth investing in a GPS tracker that also has cellular service.** Trackers that don't impose a recurring cellular service fee (up to $20 per month) may seem like a better deal, but we found their tracking abilities are far more limited than those that use both GPS and cellular. The GPS-only Petfon below, for example, had a limited range: between just two-thirds of a mile up to 3.5 miles. But models with both GPS and cellular, such as all of the recommended models shown here, extended to anywhere there was cell service.

› **The mapping feature is great—but not perfect.** These trackers typically geolocate only once every few minutes (partly by design in order to preserve battery power) and are approximate—but good enough to help you find a lost pet.

› **Learn how to use the device and app before you really need to.** Even on the best models we tested, some features aren't intuitive, and you don't want to be figuring them out while frantically searching for a missing pet.



$ Tractive GPS Dog LTE (TRNJAWH) $50 *(shown)*

97	OVERALL SCORE
5/5	TRACKING
5/5	EASE OF USE
5/5	EASE OF SETUP

Fi Series 2 $150

94	OVERALL SCORE
5/5	TRACKING
5/5	EASE OF USE
5/5	EASE OF SETUP

Whistle Go Explore $115

94	OVERALL SCORE
5/5	TRACKING
5/5	EASE OF USE
4/5	EASE OF SETUP

Cube GPS Real Time $30

93	OVERALL SCORE
5/5	TRACKING
4/5	EASE OF USE
5/5	EASE OF SETUP

Link The Link Smart Pet Wearable $135

91	OVERALL SCORE
5/5	TRACKING
4/5	EASE OF USE
5/5	EASE OF SETUP

Petfon Tracker II $235

60	OVERALL SCORE
2/5	TRACKING
5/5	EASE OF USE
4/5	EASE OF SETUP

Pawscout Smart (Version 2.5) $15

29	OVERALL SCORE
1/5	TRACKING
2/5	EASE OF USE
5/5	EASE OF SETUP

POOR — EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED | CR BEST BUY

ROOM MAKEOVER

Kitchen Space Savers

Have limited counter and cabinet space? This roundup of slim, sleek appliances will fit into a smaller kitchen–without sacrificing performance.

COMPACT COFFEE MAKER

Nespresso Essenza Mini $150

Sitting near the very top of our pod coffee maker ratings, this 9x5x13-inch Mini quickly delivers coffee or espresso into your cup. Nespresso offers a wide variety of coffee pods (which the company recycles).

89 OVERALL SCORE

SMALL BUT MIGHTY TOASTER

Breville Bit More BTA720XL $80

This 2-slice toaster tops our ratings and made near-perfect toast in our tests, whether you prefer it lightly golden or dark brown. And even though it's only 8x11 inches, it can still hold a sliced bagel.

92 OVERALL SCORE

LOW-PROFILE MICROWAVE

Galanz GLCMKA07BER-07 $80

This 18x14-inch model ranks highest for small microwaves we've tested. It's super-quiet and excels at evenly reheating food in our tests.

65 OVERALL SCORE

BLENDER/FOOD PROCESSOR

Cuisinart Velocity Ultra Trio BFP-650 $150

This easy-to-use blender, which takes up only 7x9 inches of your countertop, also comes with a food processor attachment and individual smoothie containers (shown, right).

65 OVERALL SCORE

3-CUP FOOD PROCESSOR ATTACHMENT

This comes with the blender (at left) and attaches to the same base. It's great at slicing, shredding, and puréeing foods. But it's a little noisy–partly why it receives a Good rating rather than a Very Good one.

56 OVERALL SCORE

STACKING POT & PAN SET

Kenmore Arlington Metallic $120

This 12-piece set stacks neatly inside your cabinets. Just turn the lids upside down.

81 OVERALL SCORE

PHOTOS: MANUFACTURERS; CONSUMER REPORTS (CUISINART)

POOR EXCELLENT | RECOMMENDED CR BEST BUY

RECALLS

TO STAY INFORMED ABOUT RECALLS FOR YOUR VEHICLES, READERS WITH MEMBERSHIP CAN USE OUR FREE CAR RECALL TRACKER AT **CR.ORG/MORE**.

BMW VEHICLES >

BMW has issued a recall for 917,106 vehicles because a short circuit may cause a fire. The recalled vehicles include the 2008-2013 1 Series Coupe and Convertible (128i), 2007-2013 3 Series Coupe (328i, 328xi, 328i xDrive) and Convertible (328i), 2007-2010 X3 SAV (X3 3.0si, X3 xDrive30i) and X5 SAV (X5 3.0si, X5 xDrive30i), 2006-2011 3 Series Sedan (325i, 325xi, 328i, 328xi, 328i xDrive, 330i, 330xi) and Z4 Roadster (Z4 3.0i, Z4 3.0si, Z4 sDrive30i), 2006-2012 3 Series Wagon (328i, 328xi, 328i xDrive), 2006-2010 5 Series Sedan (525i, 525xi, 528i, 528xi, 530i, 530xi), 2006-2007 5 Series Wagon (530xi), and 2006-2008 Z4 Coupe (Z4 3.0si). Drivers may first notice smoke near the engine compartment, the smell of burning plastic, and an illuminated check engine light.
What to do: BMW has not yet developed a solution for this problem but will notify owners of the recall by mail and, once a remedy is developed, instruct owners on how to get a free repair. If you already had a repair performed at your own expense prior to the recall notification, you may be eligible for reimbursement. For details, call BMW at 800-525-7417. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration campaign number for this recall is 22V119.

MUSHIE & CO PACIFIERS

Mushie & Co is recalling about 333,725 Frigg silicone pacifiers because the base of the silicone nipple has a fine slit that can cause the nipple to detach from the plastic shield, posing a choking hazard. The pacifiers were sold at SpearmintLove, T.J.Maxx, Lil' Tulips, and Olivia & Jade Company stores, and online at mushie.com and Amazon from April 2021 through December 2021 for about $8 for a single pacifier and about $15 for a pack of two.
What to do: Stop using the pacifier, and contact Mushie & Co at 877-687-4431 or go to mushie.com/pages/recalls for details and to get a full refund or credit.

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS ROLLER SEATS

Harbor Freight Tools is recalling about 478,800 Pittsburgh Automotive pneumatic roller seats because the connection from the seat to the seat post can break, posing a fall hazard. The seats were sold at Harbor Freight Tools stores nationwide and online at harborfreight.com from July 2014 through September 2021 for about $30.
What to do: Stop using the seat and return it to the nearest Harbor Freight Tools store for a free replacement or full refund in the form of a gift card. Call 800-444-3353 or go to harborfreight.com/rollerseatrecall for details.

MAXTRADE YOUTH ATVs

Maxtrade is recalling about 141,000 Maxtrade Youth Coolster Mountopz ATVs because they fail to comply with the requirements of the federal mandatory ATV safety standard, posing a risk of serious injury or death. The youth ATVs fail to meet the maximum speed limitations for vehicles intended for children ages 6, 10, and 12 years and older, or for teenagers, depending on the model. Additionally, for certain ATVs, the parking brakes do not prevent the movement of the vehicle. The ATVs were sold at Maxtrade dealers nationwide, and online at Amazon, familygocarts.com, killermotorsports.com, superiorpowersports.com, walmart.com, and youthmotorsports.com from January 2007 through January 2021 for $370 to $1,100.
What to do: Stop using the ATV and call 866-236-8993 or go to coolster.com/recall for details and to get a free repair.

FAMILY DOLLAR BEACH LOUNGERS

Family Dollar is recalling about 38,300 beach loungers because they can collapse unexpectedly, posing an injury hazard if fingers get caught in the metal folding joints. The loungers were sold at Family Dollar stores and online at familydollar.com from January 2019 through September 2021 for about $25.
What to do: Stop using the lounger. Return it to a Family Dollar store for a full refund, or email Family Dollar for instructions to make the beach lounger unusable and then provide Family Dollar with a photo. Once confirmed, Family Dollar will issue a refund. Go to familydollar.com/product-recalls for details.

GIANT BICYCLES

Giant Bicycles is recalling about 20,800 2021 Cypress DX, Escape 3 Comfort, Liv Flourish FS 1, and Liv Alight 3 Comfort bicycles because the adjustable handlebar stem can become loose, posing fall and injury hazards. The bicycles were sold at authorized Giant Bicycles dealers nationwide and online at giant-bicycles.com/us or liv-cycling.com/us from October 2020 through October 2021 for $590 to $690.
What to do: Stop using the bicycle. Go to giant-bicycles.com/us/recall-information for details on how to get an inspection and free repair.

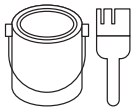
MAY IS THE BEST TIME TO BUY ...

BIKE HELMETS

BLENDERS

STROLLERS

EXTERIOR PAINTS



For more info, go to CR.org/buy.

PRODUCT UPDATE

THE LATEST RATINGS FROM OUR LABS

Top-Rated Air Fryers From Our Tests

With millions of units sold, air fryers are becoming America's favorite new kitchen appliance. And these models can do so much more than "fry."

by Tanya A. Christian

HOW AIR FRYERS WORK

1. The food to be "fried" is placed inside a removable drawer or tray that slides into the heating unit below the controls.

2. After you set the cooking time and temp, a heating element warms the cavity, typically in 5 minutes or less.

3. An internal fan rapidly circulates hot air down and around the food, operating just like the convection setting on many ovens.

4. The contents of the basket crisp and cook. The quick-moving air reduces cooking times by at least 20 percent.

WHO WOULD EVER think you could create crispy fried foods without a vat of hot oil? Enter the air fryer. The golden promise of these countertop cookers is to deliver the texture of tasty, oil-laced treats without all of the fat. It's an appliance that more households than ever are putting to work. In the past two years, over 25 million air fryers have been sold nationwide, according to the NPD Group, a market research firm. And analysts predict that the air fryer market will continue to grow upward of 66 percent in the next five years.

When Philips, the Dutch conglomerate, introduced the first air fryers in 2010, the idea was simply to offer healthier versions of traditionally fried foods. And though air frying doesn't necessarily mean the food cooked is a lot healthier, the process does have some benefits in that area. Instead of submerging food in fat, air fryers act like mini convection ovens, using a fan to rapidly circulate hot air around the food, cooking it quickly and creating a crispy exterior that approximates the color and texture of traditional frying.

Over the past decade, the products' functionality has evolved. No longer reserved for frozen fries, nuggets, and wings, the air fryer has proved to be capable of roasting chicken, making pizzas, turning out perfectly cooked vegetables, and so much more. It has also enabled busy home cooks to rethink meal prep. An air fryer can bake and reheat most foods in a fraction of the time it would take in your oven—thanks to how quickly it heats—or on the stovetop. You can now find thousands of air fryer recipes online, in cookbooks, and on social media.

What's more, even as air fryers acquire more capabilities, their prices have steadily decreased. The reason: After the runaway success of Philips' original air fryer, more manufacturers entered this growing market. Philips remains a key player, but Chefman, Gourmia, Cosori, and even Amazon have gotten in on the trend. When Consumer Reports first started testing air fryers five years ago, one would easily run you $350, a significant investment. Today, the highest-priced model in our ratings is $200, and they can go for as little as $50. At those prices, it's no wonder the air fryer has been a favorite kitchen appliance during the pandemic.

How do you choose one of these small but mighty cookers from the dozens out there? To start, don't judge an air fryer's abilities by its overall size—or even by the capacity claimed by the manufacturer (typically expressed in quarts, liters, or pounds). Instead, the key is the size of a model's basket or tray, which determines how much food it can really handle. In CR's lab, our engineers measure each model's actual capacity, which frequently turns out to be less than what the manufacturer claims.

We also gauge how noisy each model is (some can be quite loud), how easy it is to clean (in some cases, not easy at all), and the clarity and ease of its controls. "The real difference among air fryers comes down to convenience, so we designed our tests around that," says Larry Ciufo, the CR test engineer who oversees air fryer testing.

All kinds of appliance manufacturers are hitching a ride on the air fryer bandwagon. Lately we've been testing ranges, toaster ovens, and even multicookers that boast an "air fry" (read: convection) setting. But the appeal of the stand-alone air fryer—due to its size and its ability to heat food quicker than those other options—remains powerful. And our tests indicate that these devices continue to get better with time. Our highest-rated air fryer has an overall score of 87, up more than 10 points from our top model a year ago.

TO GET GREAT RESULTS, TRY THIS

No matter which model you choose, here are a few easy air fryer hacks to get perfectly cooked food.

- **Pat food dry before cooking.** Remove excess moisture from unbreaded food that you want crispy or browned, such as meat, fish, and vegetables, before seasoning.

- **Line the basket to cut down on the mess.** Reusable and disposable air fryer liners work well with most foods. The small holes allow for air circulation while keeping marinades and batters in place—and reducing the time you spend cleaning the basket.

- **Avoid overfilling the basket.** Crowd the basket or tray and you'll prevent the hot air from reaching all of the food, which slows down cooking and gives you uneven or soggy results.

- **Flip the food as it cooks.** For bigger items, such as a chicken breast, use tongs to flip the food over, typically halfway through the cook time, for more even results. For smaller pieces, take the basket out and give it a quick shake.

ICONS: RODRIGO DAMATI

ILLUSTRATION BY LISA SHEEHAN

STANDOUT MODELS FROM CONSUMER REPORTS' TESTS

87
OVERALL SCORE

BEST SMALL AIR FRYER

Chefman TurboFry Air Fryer 4.5 Quart $100

The Chefman TurboFry is the latest shining star in our ratings. It aces our tests for both noise and controls, and earns a Very Good score for cleaning. One caveat: Despite its larger claimed capacity, the interior basket measures just 2.7 quarts.

80
OVERALL SCORE

BEST LARGE AIR FRYER

Gourmia GAF686 Digital $80

Though its measured capacity is a generous 4.3 quarts, this Gourmia's overall dimensions are equivalent to some smaller-capacity models, so you get ample cooking space in a pretty compact package. It earns Excellent marks for controls and boasts a variety of presets.

72
OVERALL SCORE

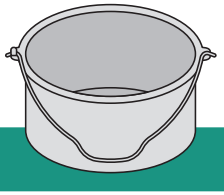
BEST BUDGET BUY

Dash Express Tasti-Crisp 2.6 Quart Air Fryer $50

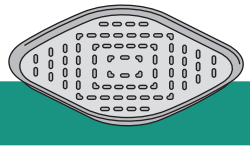
The Dash Express is on the small side with a measured capacity of just 1.9 quarts, and it's lightweight (6 pounds), making it easy to transfer from cabinet to countertop. It's also one of the quietest fryers in our ratings, and carries a 2-year warranty (most cover just a year).

AIR FRYER ACCESSORIES

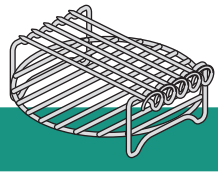
You can roast chicken, cook pizzas, and even bake cakes with the addition of a few worthy extras, which can cost $10 to $25.



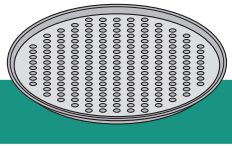
Cake Barrel
Whip up a mini red velvet cake, bread rolls, or a casserole using this small pan that sits inside the air frying basket. We had great results with an 8-inch set that had a nonstick coating, making it a breeze to clean.



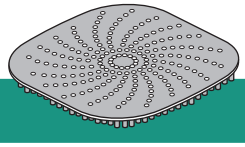
Grill Pan/Tray
If your air fryer has a mesh basket, consider a nonstick grill pan with small openings for airflow. It makes cooking everything from turkey burgers to "grilled" asparagus a much easier task.



Steel Skewer Racks
Nothing quite beats the smoky, charred taste of food cooked on a grill. But a stainless steel rack with accompanying skewers can deliver air fried kebabs that come pretty close.

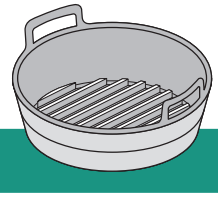


Pizza Pans
Don't bother waiting for a pizza stone to heat in the oven. Instead, use these mini pizza pans for personal-sized pies with crispy crusts that cook in a fraction of the time.



Reusable Liners
Keep mess at a minimum with these silicone liners that work well with most foods, including brussels sprouts and breaded chicken. (Disposable paper liners don't work as well.)

Silicone Baking Cups
Sturdy enough to hold cupcake batter or a quiche mixture, these molds turn out nicely baked treats with no mess. (Note: Your air fryer may fit only a few at a time.)



Silicone Pot
Prepare meats, vegetables, or your favorite frozen foods using these pots, which you can set in your air fryer's basket. The ones we tried were dishwasher-safe, making for easy clean up.

Ratings › **Air Fry Intelligence** Keep things crispy in the kitchen with these top-rated models. Note the measured capacity; you'll want one that can handle at least 4 quarts if you're cooking for a crowd.

Brand + Model	Overall Score	Price	Test Results			Features					
			Controls	Noise	Cleaning	Measured capacity (qt.)	Dimensions (HxWxD, in.)	Weight (lb.)	Digital display	Dishwasher-safe	Preprogrammed settings
AIR FRYERS											
✓ **Chefman** TurboFry Air Fryer 4.5 Quart	87	$100	⏫	⏫	⬆	2.7	13x11x15	10	●	●	●
✓ **Dash** Digital Tasti Crisp Air Fryer 2.6 Quart	81	$80	⬆	⏫	⬆	1.9	11x9x11	6	●	●	
✓ **Gourmia** GAF686 Digital	80	$80	⏫	⬆	⬆	4.3	14x11x14	9	●	●	●
$ **Chefman** TurboFry Touch Air Fryer	79	$65	⬆	⏫	⬆	2.4	12x10x13	7	●	●	
✓ **Williams Sonoma** Open Kitchen Digital Air Fryer	77	$100	●	⏫	⬆	3.6	13x11x14	11	●	●	●
✓ **NuWave** 6 Quart 37001	75	$130	⏫	●	⬆	5.8	14x11x16	15	●	●	●
$ **GoWise USA** GW22731	73	$60	⏫	⏫	●	4.9	14x12x15	12	●	●	●
$ **Gourmia** 5 Quart Analog Air Fryer	73	$60	⬆	⬆	⏫	3.4	13x11x13	9		●	
✓ **NuWave** Brio Air Fryer 36011	73	$100	⏫	⬆	●	2.6	13x10x14	12	●	●	●
✓ **Amazon** Basics 3.2 Quart Compact Multi-Functional Digital Air Fryer	73	$80	⏫	⬆	⬆	2.4	13x11x15	10	●	●	
✓ **Oster** DiamondForce Nonstick XL 5 Quart Digital Air Fryer	73	$100	⬆	⬆	⬆	3.6	13x12x15	12	●	●	●
✓ **Dash** Express Tasti-Crisp 2.6 Quart Air Fryer	72	$50	●	⏫	⬆	1.9	11x9x11	6		●	
✓ **Dreo** Air Fryer	72	$90	⬆	⬆	⬆	2.5	12x10x13	8	●	●	●
✓ **Beautiful by Drew Barrymore** 6 Quart Touchscreen Air Fryer	72	$100	⬆	⬆	⬆	4.0	13x12x15	11	●	●	
✓ **Ninja** AF100	71	$80	⏫	●	⬆	3.0	13x11x14	10	●	●	●
✓ **Philips** Essential XL HD9270/91	71	$180	⬆	⬆	⬆	3.6	12x13x16	13	●	●	●
✓ **Elite Platinum** EAF-1506D 3.5 Quart Digital	71	$95	⬆	⬆	⬆	3.4	11x12x16	12	●	●	●
Hamilton Beach Digital 35050	70	$85	⏫	⬆	⬆	2.6	13x11x14	9	●		●
PowerXL Vortex PAF-7QB	70	$120	⏫	⬆	●	5.7	14x12x16	12	●		●
GoWise USA Air Fryer Duo GW22826-S Digital Touchscreen	70	$70	⬆	⬆	⬆	3.3	13x11x13	9	●		●
Emeril Lagasse Air Fryer, Special Edition 2021 (5 Quart)	70	$90	●	⬆	⬆	3.3	14x11x14	8	●	●	●
Oster DuraCeramic Tilt & Rotate CKSTAF-TECO	69	$70	⬆	⬆	⬆	5.0	13x13x15	12	●	●	
Dash Deluxe DFAF455GBAQ01	69	$100	⬆	⬆	●	5.6	14x13x15	12		●	
Cuisinart AFR-25	68	$100	⬆	⬆	●	2.1	12x13x16	12			
Ninja Foodi 2-Basket DZ201	68	$200	⬆	●	⬆	6.0	12x16x14	18	●	●	●
Cosori Max XL 5.8 CP158	68	$120	⬆	●	⬆	4.5	13x12x14	12	●	●	●

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/airfryers.

HOW WE TEST: The **Overall Score** is based on controls, noise, and ease of cleaning. To evaluate an air fryer's **Controls,** we consider legibility of markings and the ease of setting desired time and temperature. **Noise** is measured with the appliance in operation on a countertop. Our assessment for **Cleaning** includes how easy it is to wash the basket and interior, along with the air fryer's exterior surface.

⏬ ⬇ ● ⬆ ⏫ POOR EXCELLENT | ✓ RECOMMENDED $ CR BEST BUY

SAVE BIG ON Rx DRUGS!

ONLINE PHARMACIES CAN OFFER MEDS FOR LESS THAN YOU'D PAY ELSEWHERE—EVEN WITHOUT USING INSURANCE. HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET THE BEST DEALS.

BY LISA L. GILL • ILLUSTRATIONS BY SINELAB

ONLINE Rx
THE LOWDOWN

SINCE THE PANDEMIC BEGAN, Americans have turned to online services for everything from groceries and household supplies to doctor visits. And many have also switched to online vendors to fill their prescriptions.

Although established drug chains like CVS and Walgreens have long offered mail delivery services for prescriptions, some big names like Amazon have more recently jumped into the online pharmacy business. Other newcomers include GeniusRx, HoneyBeeHealth, Ro Pharmacy, ScriptCo Pharmacy, and Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drug Company. They, along with more established online pharmacies like Costco.com and HealthWarehouse.com, promise low-cost solutions to the problem of high drug prices that even insured people often face.

The need is real. According to a 2021 Kaiser Family Foundation analysis, 3 in 10 adult Americans who need a prescription drug said they didn't take it as directed in the past year because the cost was too high. They split pills in half or even skipped doses in order to stretch out their meds. One in 6 of them didn't fill a prescription at all.

The high cost is a problem even for people who have health insurance, which can "require a person to meet a drug deductible by spending $1,000, $2,000, or more before coverage and discounts begin," says Stephen Schondelmeyer, PhD, a professor of pharmaceutical care and health systems at the University of Minnesota. "Or consumers are sometimes charged a percentage of a drug's high price tag instead of a low copay."

But the toughest problem a consumer can face is when "insurance doesn't cover a drug at all," Schondelmeyer says. He notes that hundreds of drugs aren't covered well, or at all, by insurers in order to manage costs.

That's what happened to Nevada resident Mary Laurent. The 69-year-old retiree takes the generic version of Uloric to treat gout, which she says worked well for almost a decade. But two years ago, she says her insurer moved the drug to a more costly tier. So Laurent shopped around and found it on HealthWarehouse.com for $117 for a 90-day supply, saving her about $75 compared with using insurance.

Lawmakers Seek Solutions

A dozen or so bills addressing the problem of high drug costs have been introduced in Congress over the past few years. Many focus on issues around very expensive brand-name drugs. But two provisions in President Joe Biden's proposed Build Back Better plan go further, aiming to limit Medicare Part D annual out-of-pocket expenses to just $2,000, and capping insulin prices at $35 on most insurance plans for nearly everyone who needs it.

Meanwhile, we wanted to test-drive the online sites to sample their prices and see how they compared. We shopped for a variety of common meds, scoured the FAQs, e-chatted with pharmacists, and pored over the fine print to identify the upsides and potential drawbacks to using these services.

If you're one of the millions of Americans filling prescriptions with generic drugs—which account for at least 90 percent of all meds sold in pharmacies in the U.S.—and you're looking for savings wherever you can find them, see what our spot-check of eight online sellers revealed and what you need to know if you're considering ordering from one of them.

IN GENERAL, we found that prices at the pharmacies for the drugs we looked at were low, often less than the average $12 copay that people with employer-provided insurance pay for generic drugs, according to figures from Kaiser.

Six of the pharmacies say they keep prices low in part by not accepting insurance. That means companies can avoid additional dispensing charges and other fees they may incur from an insurer or a middleman like a pharmacy benefits manager, says Lisa Faast, PharmD, founder of DiversifyRx, a pharmacy consulting firm, and owner of multiple pharmacies in Texas and Louisiana.

Zack Zeller, co-founder of ScriptCo, agrees, saying that eliminating insurance helps his company avoid the complicated rules and expenses of the insurance marketplace. The company, as well as Amazon and Costco, also keeps drug prices low in part by charging membership fees. And Amazon and Costco benefit from their huge buying power.

Still, there are some drawbacks to using these online services, particularly if your medications are less common, you take them infrequently, they require refrigeration or other special handling, or you need them quickly.

Also, while prices at these sellers

are often low, some people with good insurance may get better deals, or even drugs at no cost, with their insurance.

One downside to paying out of pocket for your meds, whether at one of these websites or elsewhere, is that the cost typically won't go toward your insurance deductible. But check with your insurer, because some allow it, Schondelmeyer says. And in California, people with insurance on file at a pharmacy who pay for drugs on their own will have the cost go toward their deductible.

Here's what else we found in our check of online pharmacies.

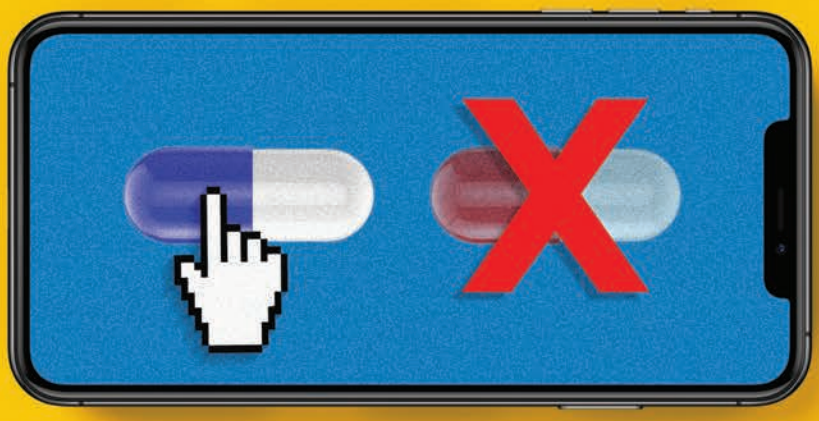
PRICES CAN BE VERY GOOD

At four of the pharmacies we looked at–Cost Plus, GeniusRx, HoneyBee, and Ro Pharmacy–all five of the generic drugs we shopped for cost less than the average insurance copay of $12 for generics, with no added fees. At two others–Costco and HealthWarehouse.com–at least some of the drugs cost less than that. At Amazon, all cost more than that amount, although other benefits the site offers could have made it worthwhile. Note: To take advantage of ScriptCo's rock-bottom prices, you need to pay a $140 annual membership.

BOTTOM LINE: Online pharmacies can be a great deal, especially if you take common generic drugs on a recurring basis. But it pays to compare prices at different pharmacies.

YOU MAY GET BIGGER DISCOUNTS WITH A MULTI-MONTH SUPPLY

If you order medication for multiple months, the savings can be substantial. At Amazon we found a six-month



SMART ONLINE SHOPPING MOVES

THERE ARE GOOD reasons to have a relationship with a flesh-and-blood pharmacist who knows the medications you take. While all of the online pharmacies we spoke with said they take precautions before filling a prescription, there are some safety steps that you can take, too.

Supply information about all your pills.
Traditional pharmacists have access to your insurance and medication records, so they can spot potentially dangerous interactions with prescribed medications. But it's harder for online pharmacies that don't take insurance. Instead, they typically ask you to tell them what you take. "It's up to you to provide all the details of everything you use," says Stephen Schondelmeyer, PhD, a professor of pharmaceutical care and health systems at the University of Minnesota. That includes all prescription and over-the-counter drugs, as well as any vitamins and dietary supplements you take.

Find out how to contact a pharmacist online.
All the online pharmacies we looked at allow you to contact a pharmacist by some combination of phone, email, chat, or video chat. But don't wait for an emergency to figure out which method works best for you. Reach out whenever you are uncertain about how or when to take a drug, or even if you should take it at all. Pharmacists are available 24/7 at Amazon and Mark Cuban Cost Plus Drug Company. The others typically make their pharmacists available during their regular business hours.

For complicated drug regimens, stick with a walk-in pharmacy.
If you take multiple medications, follow a complicated dosing schedule, or take drugs that require an unusual formulation, consider sticking with a single walk-in pharmacy, says Doug Hoey, PharmD, CEO of the National Community Pharmacists Association. That's because the risk of errors–taking medication at the wrong time or in the wrong amount, or forgetting a dose–goes up when you take multiple meds. Getting your drugs from a single pharmacy is also important if you take meds that are known to interact with each other.

supply of generic Lipitor (atorvastatin) for just $6 compared with $14.60 for a single month. At Ro Pharmacy, a 30-day supply of generic Lipitor was $9.90, but if you order an entire year's worth, the cost is $19.80.

BOTTOM LINE: If you're certain that you'll be taking the same drug at the same dosage for the foreseeable future, you can realize especially big savings. But if you're unsure whether you'll be taking a drug longer than a few weeks, or if the dosage may change, buying this way is more of a gamble. That's because in most cases you won't be able to return pills to the pharmacy for a refund, Schondelmeyer says.

MEMBERSHIP FEES MAY CUT INTO YOUR SAVINGS

This is true of Amazon, where you'll need a Prime membership ($139 per year), Costco ($60 per year), and ScriptCo ($140 per year or $50 per quarter). But as a ScriptCo member, you're treated to jaw-droppingly low prices. A month's supply of generic Lipitor was just 54 cents, and no price exceeded $5 for any of the five sample drugs we checked.

BOTTOM LINE: Membership fees may not be a big deal if you're already a Costco or Amazon Prime customer or would enjoy the perks of membership, which include, for example, access to Costco stores nationwide or to Amazon's TV series and movie streaming. And starting later this year, ScriptCo plans to offer a household membership option that, like the regular membership plan, will have no limit on the number of drugs you can order. But unless you take medications on a regular basis, the savings might not justify the fee.

USING A FLEXIBLE SPENDING OR HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNT ISN'T ALWAYS EASY

FSAs and HSAs are a great way to save on medication by allowing you to use pretax dollars for those and other healthcare costs. Amazon, Costco, Cost Plus, and HealthWarehouse.com make using those benefits simple; just enter the information when you order a drug online. You can also use the accounts when you fill prescriptions at GeniusRx, but only with phone orders. With the rest, you need to pay up front and then submit your receipt to your FSA or HSA account for a refund.

BOTTOM LINE: If you have a flexible spending or health savings account, it's more convenient if the pharmacy accepts payment directly from your benefits card.

SOME MAY NOT CARRY YOUR Rx PILLS

Five of the sites we reviewed–ScriptCo, Ro Pharmacy, HoneyBee, GeniusRx, and Cost Plus–are not full-service pharmacies offering a comprehensive selection of medications. Instead, they focus on low-cost generic drugs. And at Cost Plus, we were unable to buy pioglitazone (Actos), which is used to treat diabetes and was one of the common generics we shopped for. Mark Cuban, the billionaire who launched Cost Plus, says he expects his company to "expand the number of drugs we offer patients beyond just generics into thousands of branded and generic drugs." The company says it will add 900 by the end of this year alone.

When it comes to insulin, only one of these five online sellers–ScriptCo–offers it. Along with GeniusRx and HoneyBee, it also makes some branded drugs available, but the

YOUR ONLINE PHARMACY PRICE GUIDE

We shopped for a month's supply (30 tablets) of five common generic drugs in February and March 2022. Here's what we found.

	Does it ship to all states?*	**Atorvastatin** 20 mg *For high cholesterol*	**Celecoxib** 200 mg *For pain*	**Duloxetine** 20 mg *For depression*	**Clopidogrel** 75 mg *For blood clots*	**Pioglitazone** 30 mg *For diabetes*	
Amazon.com/ pharmacy Membership: $139/yr.	No Not HI	$14.60	$17.00	$14.90	$12.80	$64.70	■ Wide selection of generic and branded drugs. ■ Offers presorted pills packed in daily bundles. ■ Accepts insurance.
Costco.com Membership: $60/year	Yes	$13.99	$7.79	$8.99	$6.79	$13.79	■ Wide selection of generic and branded drugs. ■ Nonmembers can use in-store pharmacies. ■ Accepts insurance.
CostPlusDrugs.com	No Not NC	$3.90	$6.30	$4.20	$5.70	NA	■ Plans to make its own generic drugs, which could lower prices more.
GeniusRx.com	No Not AL	$4.50	$6.00	$3.60	$2.40	$8.10	■ Prescriptions for pets are available.
HealthWarehouse.com	Yes	$9.90	$16.50	$12.00	$9.80	$15.00	■ Wide selection of generic and branded drugs. ■ Can select specific generic drug manufacturers.
HoneyBeeHealth.com	No Not AL, IN, LA, MT, OR	$3.00	$6.00	$4.00	$4.00	$8.00	■ Can select specific generic drug manufacturers.
Ro.co/pharmacy	No Not 13 states. Go to the website for details.	$9.90	$10.74	$10.74	$10.29	$11.97	■ 12-month refills are available.
ScriptCo.com Membership $50/quarter or $140/year	No Not AL, MT, TN, NC	$0.54	$1.44	$1.50	$1.38	$4.33	■ Household membership coming in 2022.

*As of March 2022. More states may be added this year.

savings may not be significant.

The other three online retailers—Costco, HealthWarehouse.com, and Amazon—are full-service pharmacies where you can fill nearly any prescription, including insulin.

BOTTOM LINE: If you have no need for specialty medications and can get all the drugs you take at a single low-cost pharmacy, these online pharmacies can be a great way to save on your prescription drug costs.

But think twice about ordering from these sites if you'll have to fill other prescriptions at a second or even a third pharmacy, Schondelmeyer says. (For more on safety, see "Smart Online Shopping Moves," on page 25.) You may be better served by using a single full-service pharmacy that can help manage all of your medications—with an eye toward possible adverse interactions—instead of cherry-picking around the internet for the lowest prices at multiple pharmacies.

MAKE SURE THE SITE CAN SHIP TO YOU

Only two of the online sellers we checked—Costco.com and HealthWarehouse.com—shipped to all states when we checked their websites this February and March. Three of the websites ship to all but a single state: Amazon doesn't ship to Hawaii; Cost Plus doesn't ship to North Carolina; and GeniusRx doesn't ship to Alabama. HoneyBee and ScriptCo exclude a handful of states each (see the chart on page 27 for more details).

Ro Pharmacy ships to the fewest states (just 37), but the company says it will be adding more to its roster this year.

BOTTOM LINE: If you live in a state that currently isn't served by an online pharmacy, check the websites periodically to see whether the lists have expanded.

SHIPPING ISN'T ALWAYS FAST OR FREE

If you need a drug quickly—for example, an antibiotic to treat an infection—these sites may not be useful because delivery is never immediate. Amazon, GeniusRx, and Ro Pharmacy promise free delivery in two to five days. But others take longer: seven to 10 days for free shipping from HoneyBee and up to 14 days from Costco. At Cost Plus, a $5 fee is charged for all shipped orders, and you'll have to wait about seven days.

If you need medication faster, expect to dig into your pocket. Priority shipping at GeniusRx is $4.99 and will get your meds to you in up to three business days. At Cost Plus, it's $15 for expedited shipping.

There may also be additional shipping costs. HealthWarehouse.com offers free shipping if you sign up for the company's e-newsletter, but it also recommends that you add a signature requirement for delivery for an additional $3.95 each time. ScriptCo offers free shipping on four orders per year with an annual membership and one free shipment with a quarterly membership. (Shipping will take one to five business days.) Any additional scripts will set you back a $6 delivery fee per shipment.

And for medications that require refrigeration, like insulin, expect to pay for overnight shipping and handling, which at HealthWarehouse.com, for example, will run you $29.95. At ScriptCo, expect to pay $40.

BOTTOM LINE: Shipping time may not be a big deal if you don't have a prescription that you need right away or that requires special handling. But the price of shipping could eat into your savings—and could make the drug even more expensive than if you bought it at a local pharmacy.

5 MORE WAYS TO SAVE ON Rx DRUGS

Online pharmacies aren't the only way to get rock-bottom prices. These strategies will also help you save.

1

Use GoodRx coupons at a walk-in pharmacy.

These free coupons, available at GoodRx.com or via the GoodRx app, can save you 80 percent off the list price of generic drugs at certain pharmacies. For more savings, consider joining the GoodRx Gold program, which gives you access to more than 1,000 meds for less than $10 per prescription. An individual membership is $9.99 a month; for $19.99 a month you can add five family, friend, or even pet members.

BONUS: Primary Gold account holders also get telehealth doctor visits for as little as $19.

2

Check out discount programs at Walgreens and Walmart.

Signing up for the Walgreens Prescription Savings Club Program lets you fill prescriptions for hundreds of generic drugs for $7.50, $10, or $15 for a 30-day supply, or $15, $20, or $30 for a 90-day supply—no insurance needed. The membership costs $20 a year for an individual or $35 for a family. Walmart's free Prescription Program makes dozens of drugs available for just $4 for a month's supply or $10 for a 90-day supply.

BONUS: Supermarkets like Kroger, H-E-B, and others also offer discounted generic drug programs. Check those in your area for details.

3

Look for generic drugs offered by your insurance.

If you have an Aetna health insurance plan, for example, you can use the Aetna Rx Discount Pharmacy Card at participating pharmacies in the insurer's network to get preferred rates. Call the number on the back of your insurance card to find a pharmacy near you. Or if your drug coverage is through CVS/Caremark, you can get discounts on several dozen select generics, although only if you fill the prescription at a CVS pharmacy or through CVS.com.

4

Search for copay coupons or patient assistance programs.

Getting a discount on the cash price of a branded drug is a little trickier than for a generic, but it's still possible. Drugmakers offer copay discount programs if you sign up, but only if you have insurance. For people whose income meets certain thresholds, a drug company's assistance program may supply drugs free, even to some people without insurance. You'll find manufacturer discount programs for branded drugs at GoodRx.com or on the app.

BONUS: Check out needymeds.org for free assistance with finding and filing the paperwork for many manufacturer programs.

5

Ask your local drugstore for a discount.

Unlike chain pharmacies, which have set cash prices, your community pharmacy may have more leeway with pricing medication, says Doug Hoey, PharmD, and CEO of the National Community Pharmacists Association. And Brandy Letson, PharmD, owner of Cashiers Valley Pharmacy in Cashiers, N.C., says your local independent pharmacy can sometimes meet or even beat low prices at a chain or online pharmacy, but you have to ask.

Goodbye, Mess

QUICK WAYS TO ORGANIZE YOUR STUFF

Take control of your home's trickiest trouble zones—in a day or less—with these easy expert solutions. BY BROOKE GLASSBERG

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDREA MONGIA

"Always ask yourself, 'Am I keeping an item for my life as it is right now or a fantasy version of myself?' Organize for the person you are. You only need the stuff you're actually going to use."
—KAY PATTERSON, THE ORGANIZED SOPRANO

ALMOST NO ONE is immune to clutter, whether it's stacks of paperwork, out-of-control collections of herbs and spices, tangles of tech cables and cords, or simply a corner of your home that's gradually being taken over by too much junk.

But order can be yours. Following are seven common challenges, many of them suggested by CR's members, that you can return to shipshape in a day or less. These bite-sized jobs will help you avoid a familiar problem: taking on a huge decluttering task and giving up before you've successfully tamed it.

According to the pros we spoke to, the same basic method applies to any space you're organizing: "The first step is always to review what you have and decide what you no longer need, use, or love," says Cary Prince, certified professional organizer and a board member of the National Association of Productivity and Organizing Professionals (NAPO).

Then edit ruthlessly. Remove anything you haven't touched in about a year: Trash what's not useful to anyone and make plans to sell or donate the rest. Things you need to keep should go back to an accessible spot; lesser-used items can be kept slightly more out of the way—on a top shelf, say, or in the back of a closet, in the garage, attic, or another area.

Use any bins, baskets, and dividers you already have before spending on new ones. But if you do need to buy something new, be sure to measure it, the things you plan to stow inside it, and the space you're organizing, to make sure everything will fit.

Ready? Prepare to experience extreme clutter-busting satisfaction, one square foot at a time.

Paperwork Piles

1 hour per file drawer's worth of material

Filing cabinet (or boxes), fire-safe folder

SIMPLIFY 'KEEP' OR 'TOSS'

Set firm rules. "Be very clear on what you need to save and why. If you aren't sure, consult a professional, like your CPA or banker," says Lucy Milligan Wahl, founder of LMW Edits. Anything from before a certain year or pertaining to accounts you no longer hold should automatically be shredded.

DIVIDE TO CONQUER

For documents you plan to keep, the fastest way to organize them is to make three categories, says Caitlin Roberts of Minimize With Purpose. Place **pending items** (invitations, bills to pay) in a folder on your desk. Divide **temporary storage** into two folders: one with current paperwork you need to hang on to for a year or less (warranties, outstanding refunds or claims, this year's tax documents) and another containing seven years' worth of tax returns. Keep **permanent storage**—identification documents, home purchase records, titles, and deeds—in a file drawer or fire-safe folder.

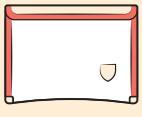
FIND A SYSTEM YOU'LL ACTUALLY USE

"A good, old-fashioned filing system works really well," Wahl says. "When labeling folders, think about how you would personally search for the contents when you need them. This is why a folder labeled 'Miscellaneous' is a terrible idea—you're never going to look for a home inspection report from five years ago in there."

Top Organizing Products*

PAPERWORK PILES

DocFortress Fireproof & Water Resistant Storage Bag $30
stealthangelsurvival.com



Brother P-Touch Pro Label Maker $57
Amazon

Overflowing Freezers

1 hour

Wire freezer baskets, stackable clear storage containers, a permanent marker

TAKE INVENTORY

Empty the freezer and throw away expired foods, then categorize what's left by type: fruits, veggies, entrées, meat, dessert, pizzas, etc., suggests Amelia Meena of Appleshine Organization and Design.

RESHELVE STRATEGICALLY

Put each category back into the freezer's compartments or shelves based on how often you consume it, taking the size of the items into account. Put things you use regularly, such as frozen veggies or pizza, where you can access them quickly; less-used items (extra bread or cuts of meat) don't need to be as handy.

REPACKAGE TO CONDENSE

"Lots of packaging is bigger than necessary," says Meena, who takes individually wrapped frozen foods—pizzas, sandwiches—out of their boxes, writes reheating instructions directly onto the plastic with a permanent marker, and puts them into grab-and-go freezer bins. She also combines the contents of multiple boxes ("two boxes of chicken nuggets can likely be opened and repacked into just one") and uses freezer-safe zip-seal bags to store leftovers. Label and date each bag, lay it flat to freeze, then stand each one upright to store.

USE BINS AND BASKETS

For a chest freezer, place stackable clear storage containers, labeled on top, along the bottom. On top of those, put easy-to-lift freezer storage baskets so that you can easily look through the "category," Meena says.

Kitchen Dumping Zones

30-90 minutes (repeat twice a year, or as needed)

Drawer inserts

CREATE A UTILITY DRAWER

Got a kitchen "junk" drawer you shove odds and ends into when you can't find a place for them? Rethink that habit, says Wahl, and rename that catchall the "utility drawer." Only place items in it that have a useful purpose, like a tape measure, scissors, and tools like pliers and a hammer. Use drawer inserts to order the drawer, keeping often-used items (such as paper, pens, rubber bands) near the front.

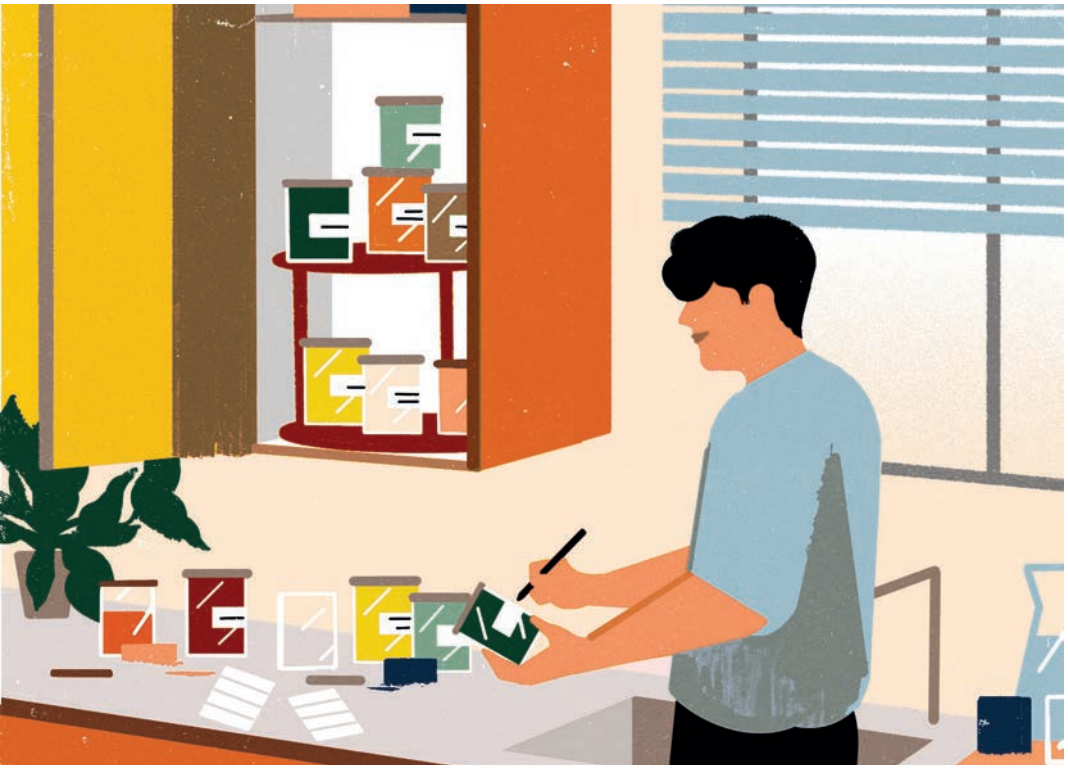
DECLUTTER COUNTERS

Kitchen surfaces are meant for food prep, cleanup, eating—not to hold mail, your purse, or keys. In spots where nonculinary items pile up, ask yourself: Do I need these things and do they belong in the kitchen? Creating new habits—like putting the mail into a sorter and your purse in the hall closet—works better than any product you can buy, says Jeffrey Phillip of Jeffrey Phillip Organization and Design.

PRODUCT ILLUSTRATIONS: T.M. DETWILER

*Consumer Reports has not tested these products.

"Organizing isn't about keeping everything neat; it's about knowing what you own and how to find it when you need it. Deciding where everything goes—and putting it back there consistently—is the key to getting and staying organized."
—SHARON LOWENHEIM, ORGANIZING GODDESS



Jumbled Up Herbs & Spices

1-3 hours

Turntable, expandable shelf or drawer organizer, matching jars, labels, erasable marker

TAKE STOCK

If you keep herbs and spices in a cabinet, consider a turntable (two levels if you can fit it) or a tiered shelf so that everything is visible. If the spice jars live in a drawer, try a spiceliner roll, an in-drawer spice rack, or an expandable organizer, all of which let you see the bottles clearly. These units are so common now that you can choose ones that match your décor, from clear acrylic to stainless steel.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ORDER

Sort herbs and spices in a way that works for you: Divide by type of herb/spice (one example: savory, sweet/baking, salts/peppers, and seasonings), separate herbs from spices, or loosely alphabetize them all.

MAKE A MATCHING SET

Decanting spices into matching jars makes for "a beautiful, consistent spice cabinet, which will bring you joy each time you cook," says Prince, founder of Cary Prince Organizing. If you're refilling from bigger jars that have leftovers, stash those jars in a nearby cabinet on a two-level Lazy Susan, says Kay Patterson of the Organized Soprano.

LABEL AND DATE

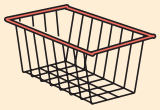
Ground herbs and spices may last up to four years before losing their punch. To keep track of freshness, Patterson recommends placing an erasable label on the bottom of the jar with a Best By date. Then, when you refill the container, erase the old date and write in the new one.

Top Organizing Products*

OVERFLOWING FREEZERS

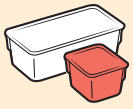
Lock & Lock Easy Essentials 22-piece Food Storage Container Set $35
homedepot.com

Design Ideas Freezer Storage Baskets From $9
containerstore.com



KITCHEN DUMPING ZONES

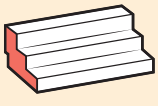
IDesign Linus Shallow Drawer Organizers
From $4.49
containerstore.com



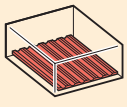
JUMBLED UP HERBS & SPICES

2-Tier Bamboo Lazy Susan $22
containerstore.com

Expand-A-Shelf $12
containerstore.com



YouCopia 10-Foot Spiceliner Roll $17
containerstore.com



Chaotic Linen Closets

3 hours

Shelf dividers, bins and baskets, labels, vacuum bags

STOCK SHELVES BY FREQUENCY OF USE

Use shelves at eye-level and just below for things you use regularly. Bulkier, less-frequently used items like extra blankets and pillows can go in soft-sided bins on an upper shelf or on the floor, says Phillip. Consider storing super low-use bedding in stackable cube vacuum storage bags or vacuum bags hidden in boxes—these are both attractive and stackable, says Amy Tokos, certified professional organizer and president of NAPO.

ORDER SHELVES BY ROOM

Use shelf dividers to keep each room's stacks together and upright, and label the shelf by room or user. Fold washcloths and store them in a rectangular basket. Give away linens that aren't part of a matching set (animal shelters, for example, often appreciate bedding donations).

KEEP JUST ENOUGH

No one needs 30 towels; a bed should have two sheet sets—the one on it and a backup. An easy way to keep sheet sets from getting broken up: Store them inside one of the matching pillowcases, Tokos says.

CONTAIN & CONCEAL

Opt for opaque small bins that hide the jumble inside (over-the-counter medicines, cosmetics, and more); label each bin externally so that you know what it holds. Discard anything expired or no longer used; pharmacies will typically take back medicines. Store medicines out of reach of children.

STORE BULK BUYS ELSEWHERE

Figure out how many rolls of toilet paper, paper towels, and soap multipacks you need in a month, then let your stock dwindle so that your closet isn't crammed. Store warehouse club products in the basement or garage and stash smaller quantities under bathroom sinks, replenishing as needed, says Tokos, who keeps a magnetic grocery list stuck to her fridge for family members to add to.

Tangled Cables & Cords

20 minutes

Rubber bands, Velcro strips, cable sleeves, cord labels, cable box, cord covers

CORRAL CABLES

To neaten up cables currently in use, wrap the excess and hide it behind furniture, says Sharon Lowenheim, certified professional organizer and founder of Organizing Goddess. Bundle up extra-long, thin cables with rubber bands, hair ties, or Velcro ties. Slide thicker groups of wires into a flexible cable sleeve, like the Alex Tech 10-foot, ½-inch Cable Sleeve, $10 (Amazon).

HIDE UGLY PLUGS

Reroute unsightly wall plugs into a surge protector behind a large piece of furniture. Lowenheim likes the Belkin Surge Protector with Flat Rotating Plug, $14 (Amazon), because the plug fits into any outlet. You can then hide the surge protector inside a cable box. Or use a decorative cord cover that adheres to a baseboard to hide cables in busy zones. D-Line makes sleek versions of both.

GET CORDS OFF THE FLOOR

Secure chargers on the surface where you juice up your smartphone or tablet with a weighted cord holder such as the Cord Buddy Charger Cord Holder, $10 (cordbuddy.com), or just direct wires where you want them with a small, adhesive cable holder like the Bluelounge CableDrop, $10 (bluelounge.com).

LABEL EVERYTHING

Designate a spot to keep cords not currently in use and make sure everyone in the household knows where to find them. Label each cord with the device it's for and store it inside a plastic bag with other similar cord types (power, audio, etc.). Lowenheim suggests putting any unmatched cables in a box labeled "Mystery Cables" along with the date you stored them there. After a year, drop off any unneeded ones at an electronics recycling facility (or see whether Best Buy will accept them).

Top Organizing Products*

CHAOTIC LINEN CLOSETS

Oxford Grey Storage Boxes with Vacuum Bag
$30 to $40
containerstore.com

Jucoan Shelf Dividers
$22
Amazon

TANGLED CABLES & CORDS

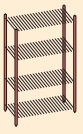
D-Line Cable Management Box $18
Amazon

D-Line Cable Raceway Cord Cover $15 and up
Amazon

CROWDED GARAGES & SHEDS

Clear Weathertight Totes
From $13
containerstore.com

Stainless Steel Wire Shelving From $205
uline.com



*Consumer Reports has not tested these products.

"When you start organizing a space, you always come across things that don't belong. Don't leave the area you're working in [to remove them]. Once we move to another space, we lose focus." —AMY TOKOS, FRESHLY ORGANIZED

Crowded Garages & Sheds

1 day

Storage bins, baskets and shelves, tool chest, hooks and/or racks

SORT AND STOW

Group storage items into general categories such as hardware and tools, household items, gardening, sports, and holiday decorations. Put smaller items in sturdy labeled boxes or bins (Weathertight Totes keep out moisture and pests, and stack neatly) and store them on wall shelving such as Uline's, which comes in multiple configurations.

ORGANIZE BY SIZE

If you're a DIYer with lots of hand tools, a classic tool chest on wheels with multiple drawers (one example: the Craftsman 2000 Series 26.5-in. W x 34-in. H 5-Drawer Steel Rolling Tool Cabinet, $279, from lowes.com) lets you store them efficiently and have a work surface. Or install a pegboard (available at home centers) on a wall and hang tools from hooks. Get larger tools like shovels, rakes, and brooms off the floor with hooks or install a tool rack such as the Walmann Wall Mounted Tool Organizer, $50 (Amazon), along a side wall.

PARK ALL YOUR WHEELS

Designate a "parking space" for heavy items such as snow blowers and lawn mowers. Suspend bikes from joists, or use floor stands or wall racks like the Wallmaster Bike Rack, $20 for two (Amazon). Things like sleds, skis, and surfboards are light enough to hang from a side wall with other sporting gear.

THE DANGEROUS CHEMICALS IN YOUR FAST FOOD WRAPPERS

CR's tests found PFAS—chemicals linked to increased cancer risk, lowered immunity, and liver damage—in all kinds of food packaging, even from companies that say they've phased them out.

BY KEVIN LORIA // PHOTOGRAPHS BY BEN GOLDSTEIN

WE HAVE THE
SWEETS
Arbys
THE FLAVOR OF NEW YORK
WHOLE FOODS MARKET

IN 1938, A 27-YEAR-OLD CHEMIST named Roy Plunkett stumbled across a new type of chemical, one with a bond so strong it would end up sticking around long after he died—in fact, almost forever.

Today, this practically unbreakable compound, created when the elements carbon and fluorine are fused, can be found in the air and the water, as well as in our bodies, our food, and our homes. That's because in the decades since Plunkett's discovery, thousands of substances that rely on this type of carbon-fluorine bond have been created and added to a wide variety of products to make them resistant to heat, water, oil, and corrosion.

These per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), known as "forever chemicals," can be found not only in nonstick pans and waterproof gear but also in the grease-resistant packaging that holds your food from takeout chains and supermarkets. Packaging made with PFAS often resembles paper or cardboard—a seemingly virtuous alternative to plastic—but salad dressing and fry oil do not leak through.

In recent decades, PFAS exposure has been linked to a growing list of problems, including immune system suppression, lower birth weight, and increased risk for some cancers. This raises alarms about the use of these compounds, especially in items such as burger wrappers and salad bowls.

"We know that these substances migrate into food you eat," says Justin Boucher, an environmental engineer at the Food Packaging Forum, a nonprofit research organization based in Switzerland. "It's clear, direct exposure." That's especially likely when food is fatty, salty, or acidic, according to a 2021 review in the journal Foods. Some research even suggests that PFAS levels are higher in people who regularly eat out.

> "We know that these substances migrate into food you eat. It's clear, direct exposure."
>
> **JUSTIN BOUCHER,** THE FOOD PACKAGING FORUM

Another concern: When packaging is tossed into the trash it can end up in landfills, and PFAS can contaminate water and soil, or it is incinerated, and PFAS can spread through the air.

Health and environmental advocates are pushing for PFAS use to be restricted, especially in items such as food packaging. In response, some fast-food and fast-casual restaurants, as well as several grocery stores, say that they have taken steps to limit PFAS in their food packaging or that they plan to phase it out.

To see how often PFAS are still found in food containers, Consumer Reports tested more than 100 food packaging products from restaurant and grocery chains. We found these chemicals in many types of packaging, from paper bags for french fries and wrappers for hamburgers to molded fiber salad bowls and single-use paper plates. They were in some packaging from every retailer we looked at, including fast-food chains—such as Burger King and McDonald's—and places that promote healthier fare, such as Cava and Trader Joe's. We even found them in packaging from places that claimed to be moving away from PFAS, though those levels were often lower than at other retailers.

"We know from our testing that it is feasible for retailers to use packaging with very low PFAS levels," says Brian Ronholm, director of food policy at CR. "So the good news is there are steps that companies can take now to reduce their use of these dangerous chemicals."

Searching for PFAS

Identifying the exact type of PFAS in a product is complex: There are more than 9,000 known PFAS, yet common testing methods can identify only a couple dozen.

So CR tested products for their total organic fluorine content, which is considered the simplest way to assess a material's total PFAS content. That's because all PFAS contain organic fluorine, and there are few other sources of the compound, says Graham Peaslee, PhD, a professor of physics, chemistry, and biochemistry at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, who has studied PFAS in food packaging.

Another complication: PFAS is used so widely—found in ink on food containers, recycled paper, machines that make packaging, and more—that it often shows up in products unintentionally.

Scientists and regulators are still debating what level of organic fluorine indicates intentional use. California has banned intentionally added PFAS; starting in January 2023, paper food packaging must have less than 100 parts per million organic fluorine. Denmark has settled on 20 ppm as that threshold. CR's experts support the 20-ppm limit.

"If they can get to 100 ppm, they should be able to get to 20 ppm," Peaslee says. "Lower is always the ultimate goal."

CR tested multiple samples of 118 products and calculated average organic fluorine levels for each. Overall, CR detected that element in more than half the food packaging tested. Almost a third—37 products—had organic fluorine levels above 20 ppm, and 22 were above 100 ppm.

Among the 24 retailers we looked at, nearly half had at least one product above that level, and most had one or more above 20 ppm. But almost all also had products below that amount. For example, while the two products with the highest average levels came from Nathan's, the chain also had four products below 20 ppm. (Nathan's told CR that it was redoing its packaging and had eliminated the high-level items.)

PROP STYLIST: MIAKO KATOH

WHICH PACKAGING HAS THE MOST PFAS?

We measured total organic fluorine, an indicator of total PFAS, in different types of food packaging. Starting in 2023, packaging sold in California must have less than 100 parts per million of organic fluorine. While some package types did, on average, have levels below that, others—especially paper bags, such as those for french fries, and fiber bowls often used for salads—had higher levels.

5.6 PPM
TAKEOUT CONTAINERS

15 PPM
PAPER TRAYS

17.2 PPM
BAKERY/ DELI PAPER

19.9 PPM
PAPERBOARD/ CARDBOARD CONTAINERS

22 PPM
BAKING/COOKING SUPPLIES

59.2 PPM
FOOD WRAPPERS/ LINERS

149 PPM
SINGLE-USE PLATES

156.8 PPM
MOLDED FIBER BOWLS/TRAYS

192.2 PPM
PAPER BAGS

Putting PFAS Claims to the Test

We looked at retailers that claimed to be phasing out PFAS, including Cava, Chipotle, Panera Bread, Sweetgreen, and Whole Foods Market. All 13 of the products the companies said had reduced PFAS still had some detectable organic fluorine, and seven were above 20 ppm. They ranged from a Whole Foods soup container with 21 ppm organic fluorine—the only Whole Foods item to top the 20-ppm limit—to a paper bag for pita chips from Cava with 260 ppm.

In response to questions from CR, companies stressed that with PFAS so common in the environment, it's almost impossible to eliminate them entirely. Sweetgreen, for example, said, "We may have trace amounts of fluorine in our bowls. Unfortunately, PFAS are a widespread problem and are present in everyday life from tap water to air to soil." Whole Foods said the company "does not make PFAS-free claims but has strived to prevent intentionally added PFAS in packaging." Panera and Chipotle also said their goal was to avoid packaging with intentionally added PFAS.

Cava said that supply chain problems had slowed its "transition to eliminating added PFAS." The company said that it hoped to complete that process by the end of 2022 and that it had updated its public statements to reflect the new timeline.

Michael Hansen, PhD, senior scientist at CR, acknowledges that trace amounts of PFAS in food packaging may be inevitable. And that's why he says that "no company should tell consumers that their products are 100 percent free of PFAS." But he also says CR's tests show that getting to very low levels is possible and should be a goal for everyone.

Dangerous Substitutes

CR tested a subset of about 50 products—including those with the highest organic fluorine levels—to see which specific PFAS they contained. That test, regularly used by industry, regulators, and researchers, is limited: It can detect only 30 of the thousands of known PFAS. Still, that test provided several key insights.

First, one of the PFAS we found at the highest concentrations is a compound called PFBA, which may accumulate in the lungs and has been linked to more severe cases of COVID-19.

In addition, the testing detected two PFAS compounds that, because of their known risks, are no longer manufactured in the U.S. One of them, PFOA, was the most frequently detected compound, and the other, PFOS, was the fifth most common. "Manufacturers could unknowingly still be using the compounds, or they could be using materials produced overseas," Hansen says. Another possibility: The compounds are now so widespread in the environment that they keep showing up even after production of them in this country stopped.

Finally, the test for specific PFAS found that those 30 compounds accounted for only a tiny fraction—less than 1 percent—of the organic fluorine found in the products. That shows that the vast majority of PFAS are not identified with commonly used tests, Peaslee says. And it underscores an ongoing argument about whether the compounds should be regulated as a group or on a case-by-case basis.

The Food and Drug Administration favors regulating them individually, it told CR, because concerns about one specific PFAS might not be "indicative of concerns for all chemicals classified as PFAS."

But CR's Hansen says that when regulators try to restrict specific compounds, such as PFOA, manufacturers may simply switch to others—and can decide on their own to call new compounds safe, without independent verification.

How to Avoid PFAS

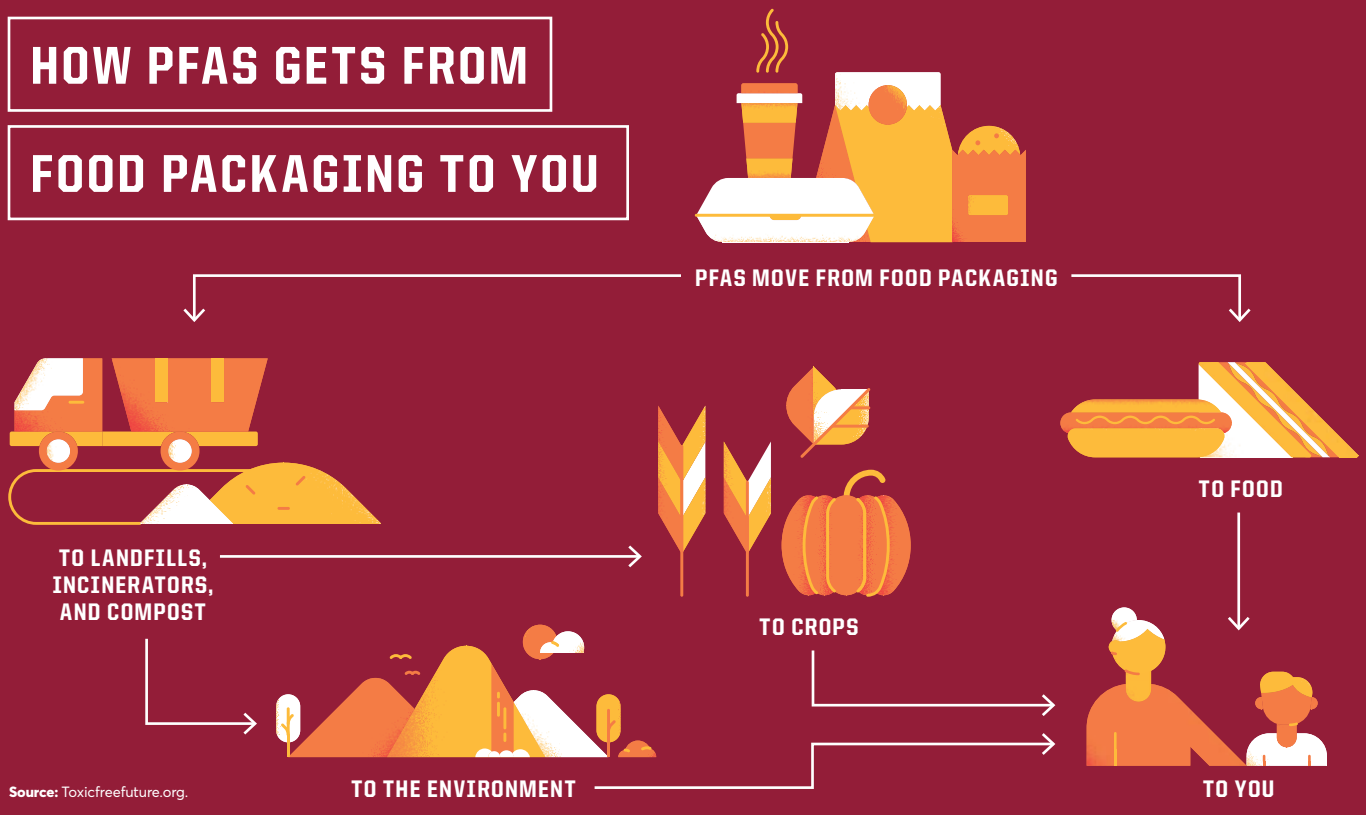
Admittedly, steering clear of PFAS in food packaging isn't easy. After all, though CR's tests identify some products in restaurants and grocery stores that have higher amounts, it's not practical, for example, to say, "I'd like my Big Mac in a PFAS-free wrapper, please."

Still, CR's findings provide another reason to limit how often you eat takeout food. And there are other steps you can take to limit your exposure to PFAS, as well as some measures that regulators and industry can take.

Favor retailers that have pledged to reduce PFAS. While their levels are not zero, PFAS levels in food packaging at those retailers tend to be somewhat lower. And giving them your business supports efforts to address the problem.

Don't assume products with environmentally friendly claims are PFAS-free. We detected at least some organic fluorine in every product with those kinds of claims. Several even had levels above 100 ppm. That included a McDonald's Big Mac container labeled as using paper from "responsible sources," a focaccia bag from Sweetgreen labeled "EcoCraft," and paper plates from Stop & Shop labeled as "100% compostable." (After being contacted by CR, Stop & Shop said it was removing the plates from shelves.) To be certified as compostable by the Biodegradable Products Institute, products are supposed to have less than 100 ppm organic fluorine. Hansen says any PFAS in

> "Trying to ban individual PFAS is an impossible game of whack-a-mole. As soon as one is addressed, industry comes up with another."
>
> **BRIAN RONHOLM,** CONSUMER REPORTS



compostable products is concerning because of how long the compounds last in the environment.

Transfer takeout food out of its packaging when you can. The longer food sits in packaging, the more likely it is that PFAS will migrate to your food. That may be especially important if your food is warm and if it comes in paper bags or molded fiber bowls, which had the highest levels in CR's tests. Ideally, put food into foil, silicone, or glass containers, which typically don't have PFAS.

Don't reheat food in its original packaging. That could make it easier for PFAS to get into food.

Test your water for PFAS. If the level is high, consider using a water filter. For more, go to **CR.org/waterchart**.

Limit exposure from other sources. The biggest risk from PFAS is from cumulative exposure over time. So try to limit the use of other products known to contain PFAS, including water-repellent clothing and stain-resistant carpeting.

Protecting the Next Generation

Even if you take all those steps, you will still be exposed to PFAS, precisely because it is so ubiquitous. "That's why CR and other advocates support banning PFAS in food packaging, and restricting its use in other products, too," says Ronholm, CR's food policy expert.

Other experts say that, especially with food packaging, PFAS chemicals are clearly not essential. "We are paying enormous amounts of money to clean up contamination from PFAS," but it would be better to ban them from food packaging and other unnecessary uses to begin with, says Liz Hitchcock, director of Safer Chemicals Healthy Families, a consumer advocacy group.

Ronholm and others also say the federal government should regulate PFAS as a group. "Trying to ban individual PFAS is an impossible game of whack-a-mole," he says. "As soon as one is addressed, industry comes up with another."

The Environmental Protection Agency now has guidance levels on just two PFAS—PFOS and PFOA—and just in drinking water. And even those are too high, says Philippe Grandjean, PhD, a professor of Environmental Medicine at the University of Southern Denmark and an expert on PFAS health risks.

In addition, research from the EPA and elsewhere confirms that many newer PFAS chemicals, like their older cousins, are likely to remain in the environment almost indefinitely and to pose health risks, especially to infants.

"The next generation is being exposed to these toxic compounds at the most vulnerable time period in their development," Grandjean says.

Says Ronholm: "It's long past time we got PFAS out of products, our water, and our food."

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Testing for this project was supported by the Forsythia Foundation, which promotes healthier people and environments by reducing harmful chemicals in our lives.*

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS VAN ROOYEN

CR REVEALS: WHO HAS PFAS IN THEIR FOOD WRAPPERS?

THESE RESULTS SHOW levels of total organic fluorine, a measure of PFAS, in 118 food packaging products gathered from major fast-food and fast-casual restaurants, as well as supermarkets. PFAS in food

Arby's

	PPM
Bag for cookies	**457.5**
Wrapper for sandwich wrap	**32.0**
Wrapper for Classic Roast Beef sandwich	12.0
Wrapper for Classic Beef 'N Cheddar sandwich	8.5
Container for french fries	ND
Container for sliders	ND

Burger King

Bag for cookies, French toast sticks	**345.7**
Wrapper for Whopper	**249.7**
Bag for chicken nuggets	**165.0**
Container for french fries	13.0
Container for chicken, french fries	12.0
Container for tater tots	8.5

Cava

Fiber tray for kids meal	**548.0**
Fiber bowl for grains, salad	**508.3**
Wrapper for mini pita, pita sandwich	**280.0**
Bag for pita chips	**260.0**
Wrapper for pita	**202.0**
Wrapper for sides	13.3

Checkers

Container for french fries	**27.0**
Wrapper for chicken, hamburger	15.0
Container for chili dog	ND
Container for chicken bites with french fries	ND

Chick-fil-A

	PPM
Wrapper for sandwich wrap	**553.5**
Bag for sandwich FOIL-LINED	10.5
Container for sides	8.5

Chipotle

Fiber bowl with four compartments	**35.5**
Wrapper for burrito	**26.3**
Fiber bowl for sides, meals	11.7

Five Guys

Wrapper for hamburger ALUMINUM FOIL	8.0
Container for french fries	ND
Wrapper for vegetable sandwich ALUMINUM FOIL	ND
Wrapper for hot dog ALUMINUM FOIL	ND

Freshii

Fiber bowl for salad	16.7
Wrapper for burrito, wrap	9.7

Hannaford

Bakery plate under cake	**23.3**
Baking nonstick aluminum foil	ND
Paper plates GREASE-RESISTANT	ND
Bakery sheet	ND

Kroger

	PPM
Baking cups	**51.3**
Tray for take-and-bake double pepperoni pizza	15.0
Paper plates GREASE-RESISTANT	ND
Baking liner for muffins	ND

McDonald's

Bag for french fries	**250.3**
Bag for cookies	**250.0**
Bag for Chicken McNuggets	**219.0**
Container for Big Mac	**195.3**
Wrapper for double cheeseburger	15.0
Container for Chicken McNuggets	13.5
Container for french fries	7.5
Wrapper for Egg McMuffin	7.0
Wrapper for McChicken sandwich	ND

Nathan's Famous

Bag for sides GREEN STRIPE	**876.0**
Bag for sides RED STRIPE	**618.0**
Wrapper for sandwich	**104.0**
Container for hamburger	**42.0**
Container for hot dog	9.8
Container for fish sandwich	ND
Container for french fries	ND
Container for shrimp sandwich	ND

Note: Products were selected based on availability at the time of the visit (August to November 2021) at stores in Connecticut, Mississippi, New Jersey, New York, and Texas. Levels shown are averages of multiple samples of each product. All packaging is paper-based unless otherwise noted. Results are not representative of all the packaging from a retailer, and packaging may have changed since CR conducted these tests. "ND" means "not detected" (the test, which can generally detect 10 ppm or more, did not find any organic fluorine).

packaging have been linked to potential harms to human health and the environment. Products with two red squares have 100 parts per million organic fluorine or more. Starting next year, California will ban food packaging that exceeds that level. Products with one red square have 20 ppm organic fluorine or more, a stricter standard for food packaging set by Denmark. CR supports that lower cutoff.

Key

■ 20 PPM OR MORE

■■ 100 PPM OR MORE

ND NOT DETECTED

Panera Bread

Container for flatbread pizza	■	**82.0**
Bag for baguette	■	**35.7**
Wrapper for sandwich	■	**30.3**

Popeyes

	PPM
Bag for french fries	9.3
Bag for sandwich FOIL-LINED	7.0

Roy Rogers

Wrapper for hamburger FOIL-LINED	■	**29.0**
Container for french fries		12.5
Wrapper for breakfast sandwich		10.5
Container for baked beans		8.0

Shake Shack

Container for hamburger	10.5
Container for hot dog	10.3
Container for french fries	8.3
Container for chicken nuggets	7.0

Smashburger

Wrapper for breakfast sandwich	9.5
Container for french fries	ND
Wrapper for hamburger	ND

Stop & Shop

Paper plates BAMBOO	■■	**368.7**
Paper plates GREASE-RESISTANT	■■	**226.7**
Tray for store-brand thin-crust extra cheese pizza	■	**23.0**

Stop & Shop *continued*

		PPM
Baking cups PASTEL	■	**22.0**
Bakery tray under cake ROUND		12.0
Wrapper for unsalted butter		ND
Bakery tray under cake RECTANGULAR		ND
Bakery box for bakery items		ND
Baking cups PARTY DESIGN		ND
Wrapper for sandwich		ND
Bakery sheet		ND
Bakery cup for muffin		ND

Sweetgreen

Paper bag for focaccia	■■	**288.0**
Fiber bowl for salad		9.3
Fiber bowl for sides, meals		8.8

Taco Bell

Paper bag for chips	■■	**145.0**
Wrapper for taco		10.0
Wrapper for burrito		9.3
Takeout container for Chicken Power Bowl PLASTIC		ND

Trader Joe's

Bakery box for pancake bread	■■	**167.0**
Bakery tray under Patisserie de Chocolat cake		12.5
Bowl for frozen chicken pot pie		10.5

Trader Joe's *continued*

	PPM
Bakery cups for chocolate chip muffins	ND
Wrapper for unsalted butter	ND
Wrapper for cultured salted butter	ND
Tray for frozen 5 Cheese Greek Spiral	ND

Wendy's

Wrapper for hamburger	16.7
Paper bag for cookies	10.3
Container for french fries, chicken nuggets JUNIOR	ND
Container for french fries, chicken nuggets MEDIUM	ND

White Castle

Container for clam strips	■	**26.0**
Container for hamburger		14.0
Container for sides SMALL		ND
Container for sides MEDIUM		ND
Container for fried sides		ND

Whole Foods Market

Container for soup	■	**21.0**
Wrapper for salted butter		15.0
Takeout container		14.0
Bakery plate under cake		13.3
Bakery parchment paper, 365 Whole Foods Market brand		13.0
Wrapper for sandwich		12.2
Bakery cup for muffin		ND
Bakery sheet		ND

2478 8920

BEST CREDIT CARDS TO HAVE NOW

What you've carried in your wallet for years may no longer suit your needs. How to pick the right cards for you.

BY PENELOPE WANG

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEN WISEMAN

LAST YEAR, as Jamé Krauter, 44, was looking for the best ways to save money as she planned a family trip to Disney World, she spotted several credit card offers online.

The standouts for her were an airline credit card and a travel rewards card, both promising thousands of bonus points to their new customers and perks such as free checked bags and extra points for Lyft rides.

To reap all of the appealing benefits, however, she would have to charge several thousand dollars over the next few months, along with shelling out $95 in annual fees for each card.

Krauter, a fundraising consultant in Bayville, N.Y., crunched the numbers and quickly figured out that the costs for the excursion for herself, her husband, and their three children would easily hit the required spending levels. "It was pretty clear we would come out ahead," she says.

They decided to apply for both credit cards. With their excellent credit scores, they were approved. And in December, the whole family enjoyed their Disney World trip, maxing out the perks of the new cards.

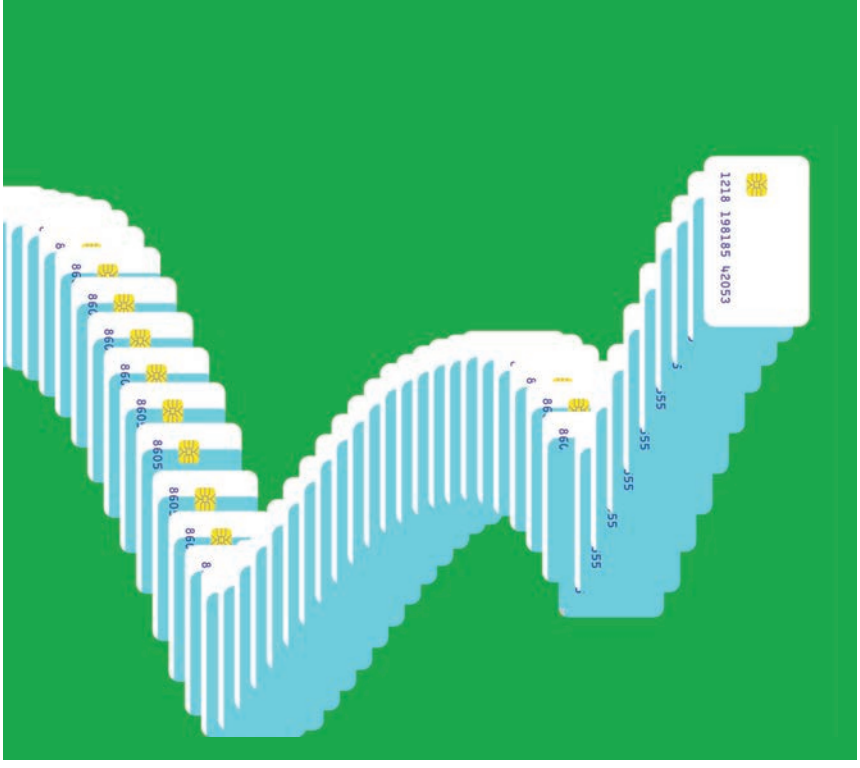
Krauter plans to hold on to several other credit cards she uses regularly. One of these cards charges an annual fee, but it pays 6 percent cash back on up to $6,000 a year in eligible grocery purchases. "It's important to make sure that our money is working for us," says Krauter, who says she tracks those rewards.

Such careful card monitoring is unusual. Surveys from Bankrate suggest that many Americans are paying less attention to the pros and cons of their credit cards. "I've found among my clients that some are still using the same credit card they got as a young adult, perhaps one linked to their college bank or credit union," says certified financial planner Natalie Slagle, founding partner at Fyooz Financial Planning in Rochester, Minn.

At issue: "Our financial needs change as we move through different life stages, but our credit cards may not change along with them," Slagle says.

Whatever stage of life you're currently in, it's wise to review your credit card portfolio periodically to make sure you're taking full advantage of rewards, avoiding unnecessarily high fees, and maintaining a good credit score. To help, we have expert answers to five common questions.

–Additional reporting by Octavio Blanco



HOW MANY DO I REALLY NEED?

IT DEPENDS ON YOUR PARTICULAR FINANCIAL SITUATION. During the third quarter of 2020, American consumers held an average of four credit cards each, according to the credit bureau Experian, with younger adults (Generation Z) owning just two while baby boomers held five. But research by the American Bankers Association has found that about 25 percent of those cards go unused.

Many Americans can do just fine with only two major credit cards, says Ted Rossman, senior industry analyst at CreditCards.com, who has cut back to two cards himself. So, for everyday use, you could hold one credit card that's widely accepted, such as a Visa or Mastercard, keeping another as a backup in case the first one is lost or stolen or you encounter fraud.

For most people, that everyday card should probably be a cash-back product, rather than one that offers you points or frequent flyer miles, Rossman says. That's because cash-back cards give you money directly, rather than a potential benefit, such as discounts for a particular hotel brand—which you may end up not using.

One option is a rewards card that offers a flat 2 percent cash back on all kinds of purchases, such as Citi Double Cash or Wells Fargo Active Cash. Other cards, like Chase Freedom Flex, may pay higher amounts, perhaps 5 percent, on certain spending categories and 1 percent on everything else. To see what's most useful for your current needs, you can compare the benefits of various cards at websites such as WalletHub, CreditCards.com, and NerdWallet.

Still, as Jamé Krauter's experience illustrates, some of us can comfortably manage more credit cards, as long as they suit our financial circumstances and spending patterns. Perhaps you shop often at a particular retailer, and its store card gives you discounts and free shipping. If you travel regularly, an airline card with perks like early boarding, waived baggage fees, and mileage bonuses may be useful. A close look at your credit card statements may well help you decide.

SHOULD I TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OFFERS FOR NEW CARDS?

MAYBE. You may have noticed a recent flood of mailings or online pitches for new credit cards—certainly a turnaround from the early days of the pandemic, when issuers were pulling back.

Some of these cards may look pretty tempting. Recently, for instance, Chase's Sapphire Reserve credit card offered 50,000 sign-up points and a $300 annual travel credit, while the no-fee Wells Fargo Active Cash card touted a $200 sign-up bonus along with 2 percent cash back on all purchases.

But be sure to scrutinize the terms. "You need to understand how you can qualify for those bonuses, since it may involve spending thousands of dollars within a few months," says Matt Schulz, chief industry analyst at LendingTree, which connects people interested in borrowing money with multiple loan companies. Check fees, too. Chase Sapphire Reserve, for one, charged a $550 annual fee plus a $75 fee for each authorized user.

You might also see offers for zero transfer cards, which allow you to shift debt from a high-interest card to one that's far lower. Some card issuers were recently promising no interest for as long as 21 months—a boon if you need to rebuild your savings or pay off debt.

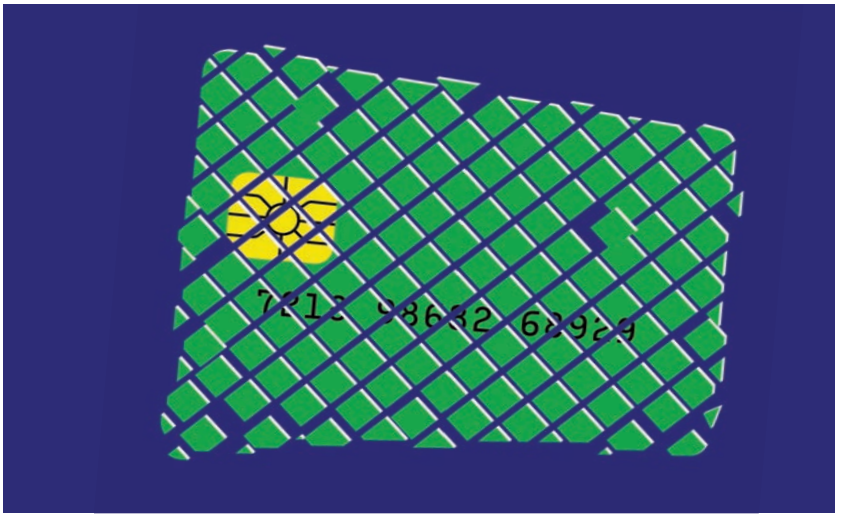
To qualify for most of these zero balance cards, however, you'll need impressive credit, perhaps a credit score of 700 or higher. And remember, "if you decide to do a transfer, just be sure you will be able to pay off that balance," says Bruce McClary, senior vice president of communications at the National Foundation for Credit Counseling, a nonprofit group.

DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO CANCEL ONES I'M NOT USING?

NOT NECESSARILY. Like many people, you probably made some recent changes in your spending habits. Given the last two years, you may certainly be traveling less frequently, and you may not have pulled out that high-fee travel credit card in many months. Or perhaps you stopped shopping at a particular retailer you used to frequent, and have shoved its card into a drawer.

Or one or more of your credit cards may have switched up what it offers you. Issuers of cards do frequently adjust their benefits, cutting back cash-back rewards for certain spending categories or hiking interest rates.

So should you ditch the cards you rarely use? If you're paying more in fees than you're receiving in benefits, canceling an out-of-favor card might be reasonable. But it's often best to keep it, says John Ulzheimer, a credit expert.



Here's why: Closing a card not only reduces the line of credit available to you but also lowers your credit score. Shutting off the card's credit line raises what's called your credit utilization rate, which is the percentage of available credit you use. This number is important, accounting for 30 percent of your credit score.

It's true that after a cancellation, as long as you pay bills promptly, your credit score will rebound—though it may take months or more. Thus, it's important to avoid canceling a card if you plan to apply for a mortgage or loan in the next few months, says Bill Hardekopf, senior industry analyst at Money Crashers, a card comparison website.

Rebuilding your line of credit after a cancellation can also take time—unless you replace it with another card with an equivalent credit line. So "it generally makes sense to keep that credit line open in case of emergency, especially if you're paying a low or no fee," says Ulzheimer.

One option: Instead of canceling, you might ask the card issuer about switching to another of its offerings, one that better fits your needs, such as a no-fee travel card. Make sure the swap is categorized as a product change, which allows you to keep the same credit line and won't affect your credit score.

I'VE HEARD ABOUT CARDS BEING 'CLOSED.' CAN I AVOID THIS?

YOU CAN CUT THE ODDS. In 2020 and 2021, many Americans had a card canceled or their credit limit reduced out of the blue. While there's no foolproof way to dodge such cutbacks by credit card issuers, a couple of strategies can help make it less likely.

For starters, it's important to note that many of the cards that issuers closed, at least in 2021, were rarely utilized, or dormant, to use industry jargon. So make sure to use each of your credit cards at least two or three times a year, even if it's just for small payments. Or set up these cards to make automatic monthly payments, perhaps for a streaming service, suggests Schulz.

Keep an eye on how much of each card's credit line you're using, too. Some card issuers might become alarmed if you begin maxing out a card you typically don't use much, because this could be a sign that you are experiencing some financial difficulties.

It's also helpful to keep your credit utilization rate to less than 30 percent. If your overall credit limit is $30,000 across all of your cards, your total balances should be under $9,000 in a month.

And the lower your utilization rate, the better, says Ulzheimer. Cardholders with credit scores of 750 or higher had median credit utilization rates of 10 percent or less, according to FICO, a credit score and data analytics firm.

WHAT'S THE SIMPLEST WAY TO TRACK MY SPENDING?

USE THE TOOLS YOU'LL FIND ON YOUR BANK'S WEBSITE OR APP TO STAY ON TOP OF YOUR ACCOUNTS. These allow you to put various alerts and notifications in place.

If you're concerned about staying below certain credit limits, for instance, you can set up balance notifications, which tell you when your account balance exceeds a certain amount. Or you can enable spending alerts for purchases over a specific dollar figure. A payment-due alert will provide a heads-up a few days in advance of that deadline.

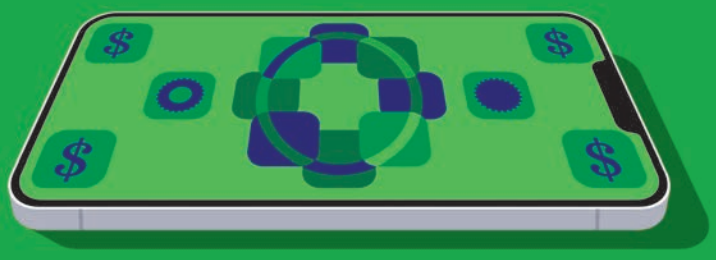
You might also consider opting for a third-party financial app, such as Mint, which connects with your credit card account and provides you with a big-picture view of your finances.

How to decide? Use whatever makes it easiest for you to manage your accounts, advises Hardekopf.

Another potentially helpful move: Turn on the auto-pay feature for your credit card bills, to make sure that you never miss a payment deadline. You can choose to auto-pay your bill in full each month. But if your finances are less certain, you may want to rely on payment-due reminders and then pay as much as you can on time.

Whether you opt for auto-pay or payment-due reminders, it's important to examine each monthly statement closely for potential billing errors and fraudulent charges, Rossman says. Also, periodically check over your credit reports. (You can get your reports free of charge at annualcreditreport.com.)

This not only will help protect against rip-offs but also ensures that your credit history is accurate and that you'll be able to qualify for any credit cards that best suit your financial needs.



The Truth About Those Peer-to-Peer Payment Apps

YOU'VE PROBABLY HEARD of—or may use—peer-to-peer (P2P) payment methods such as Cash App, Venmo, and Zelle. Typically, these apps are tied to your bank account and allow you to send money to someone or accept a payment, instantly.

That can be handy in situations such as a group dinner at a restaurant. Instead of splitting the bill between multiple credit cards, everyone can send their share via P2P to one attendee, who can then use a single credit card to cover the tab.

But there are potential drawbacks, as well. "Some of the same qualities that make P2P services so appealing to consumers—speed and convenience—expose them to significant risks," says Chuck Bell, programs director of advocacy at CR and a financial policy advocate.

With credit cards, you're liable for no more than $50 in the case of fraud or a payment made in error. But P2P payment services generally offer little or no protection against scams—where you pay for an item like a concert ticket but never receive it. Some P2P apps will mediate if you accidentally paid the wrong person but won't reimburse you directly.

For these reasons, it's key to use P2Ps only with people you know and trust, says Bell. And double-check that you're sending money to the right person. CR's experts also recommend that you:

- **Don't use P2P services for business purposes.** Look instead for a payment app created for business users, like Square Cash for Business or traditional PayPal (but not its Friends and Family option, which offers fraud protection only in certain circumstances).
- **Keep your app up to date.** The latest security fixes can help protect against theft.
- **Alert the P2P if something goes wrong.** Let your bank or credit card provider know as well; there's no guarantee, but it may be able to help. And file a complaint with the Better Business Bureau. Companies accredited by the bureau are required to respond, says Sandra Guile, director of communications for the International Association of Better Business Bureaus. You also can lodge a complaint with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's Consumer Complaint Database.

—Octavio Blanco

ROAD REPORT

NEWS & EXPERT ADVICE TO KEEP YOU AHEAD OF THE CURVE™

FIRST DRIVE

Ford Maverick

Sharing some major parts with the Ford Bronco Sport SUV, the low-priced Maverick is a refreshing alternative to larger pickup trucks. It's available with front- or all-wheel drive, has a base hybrid powertrain and uplevel turbo engine, and comes standard with FCW and AEB.

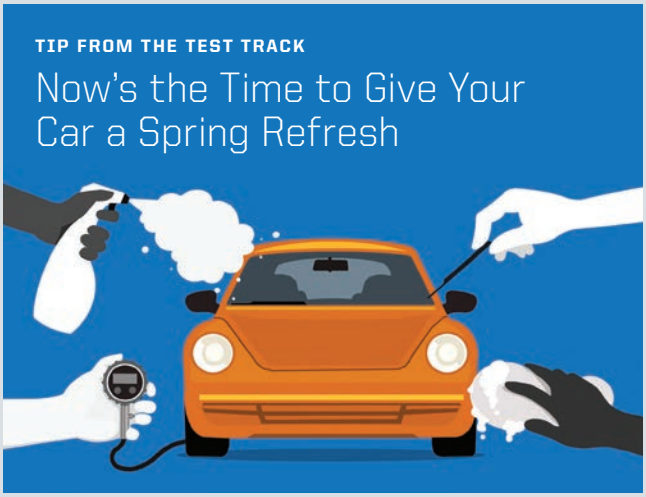
CR'S TAKE: The Maverick's suspension keeps the truck steady without the rocking typical of traditional trucks. The small size and good outward visibility make it easy to navigate through parking lots and narrow streets. Plus, the turbo version we bought is EPA-rated for a thrifty 25 mpg combined.

BASE PRICE RANGE $19,995-$26,945
DESTINATION CHARGE $1,495
PRICE AS DRIVEN $29,965

PHOTO: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

TIP FROM THE TEST TRACK

Now's the Time to Give Your Car a Spring Refresh



Wipers: Replace the blades to prepare for the rainy season. (Wipers tend to last only about six months.)
Tires: Warm weather means the tires could be overinflated—pressure rises and falls with temperatures. Check monthly and adjust to the pressure indicated on the door placard.
Cabin air filter: Prepare for pollen season by replacing this filter. Doing it yourself (use the owner's manual for guidance) may save $50 or more.
Car wash: If the car was driven in road salt, run it through a car wash to remove any residue.
Polish or wax: Provide protection from the spring assault of pollen, bugs, bird droppings, etc. (Waxes typically last only two to three months.)

THE VITAL STATISTIC

28%

Increase in the average listing price of a used car from December 2020 to December 2021. "Used-car prices are at an all-time high, but the good news is that if you need to trade in your car to buy a new one, it's going to be worth more than ever," says CR's Jake Fisher, senior director of auto testing.

Source: Cox Automotive analysis of Auto Available Inventory data.

RECALL

Hyundai, Kia

Hyundai and Kia have issued recalls for more than 480,000 vehicles that can catch fire: 2016 to 2018 Hyundai Santa Fe, 2017 and 2018 Hyundai Santa Fe Sport, 2019 Hyundai Santa Fe XL, 2014 to 2015 Hyundai Tucson, 2014 to 2016 Kia Sportage, and 2016 to 2018 Kia K900.

WHAT TO DO: Dealers will repair the issue at no charge. Park outdoors until the recall work is completed. For more information, contact Hyundai at 855-371-9460 or Kia at 800-333-4542.

AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Better Headlights Are Here

Adaptive driving beam (ADB) headlights, available in Europe and Canada for years, are now approved for use on new cars in the U.S.

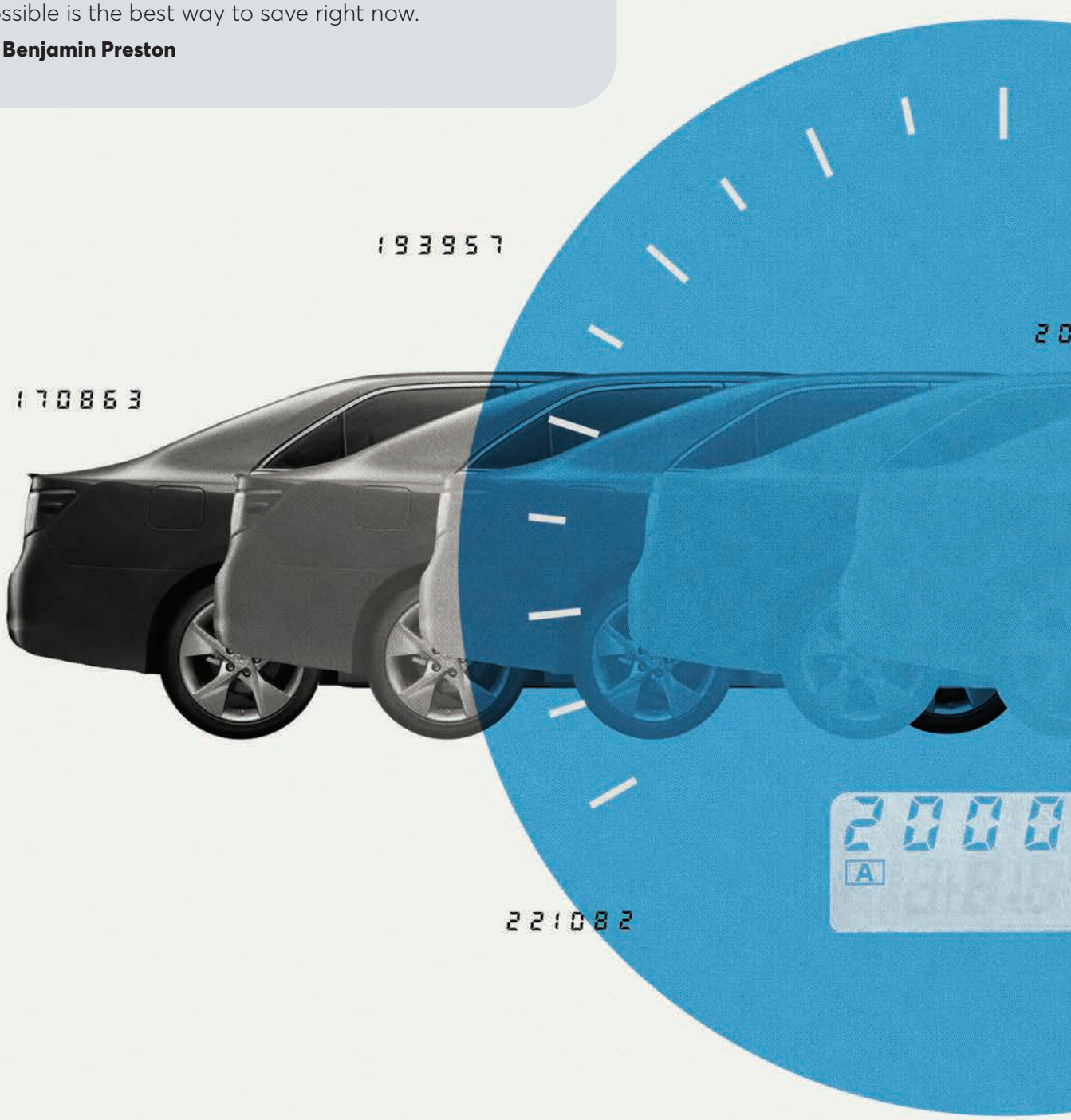
"ADB headlights provide visibility similar to high beams but limit glare for oncoming vehicles and the vehicle ahead of you," says Jennifer Stockburger, director of operations at CR's Auto Test Center and head of CR's headlight testing program.

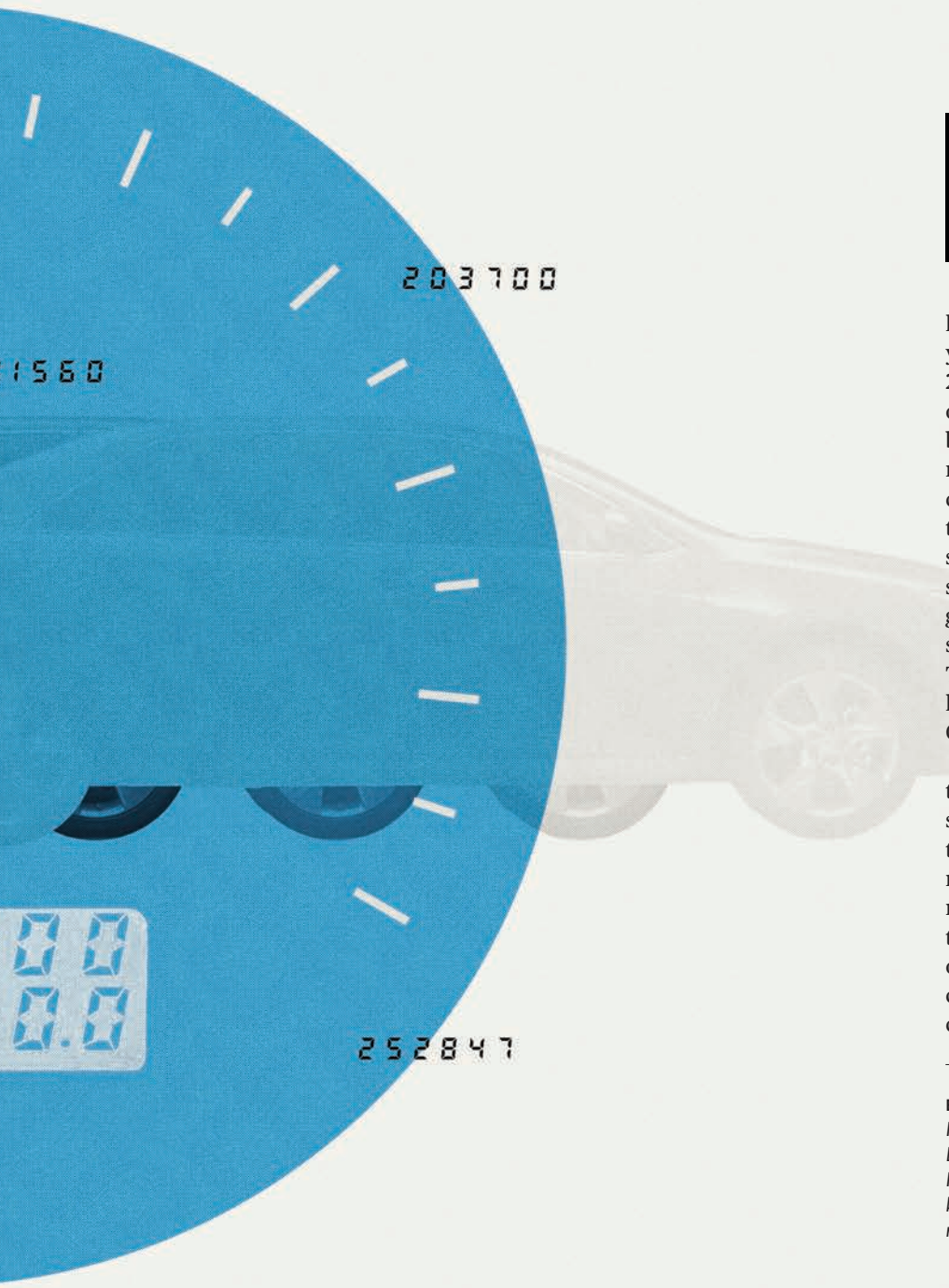
ILLUSTRATIONS BY KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS

How to Make Your Car Last 200,000+ Miles

Holding on to your vehicle for as long as possible is the best way to save right now.

by Benjamin Preston





ONE DAY DURING my high school years, my dad got excited because the odometer on his car—a 1983 Toyota Camry hatchback he'd bought used several years earlier—was about to reach 200,000 miles. We were in the middle of running that afternoon's errands, but he pulled over to the side of the road so that he, my brother, and I could sing "Happy Birthday" to the car to mark its major milestone. It was a silly thing to do, but we felt a collective sense of pride that the car was still going strong with all those grueling suburban commuter miles piled on. That pride remained for me years later, when I was still driving the same Camry past its 300,000-mile mark.

I've owned a handful of other cars that rolled through 200,000-plus miles since then. Now, years later, my job is to research and write about automotive repair and maintenance, but you don't need to be an expert to get your car to that milestone. I always stay on top of regular maintenance, and I take care of even small repairs before they can become bigger, more expensive

BENJAMIN PRESTON
For most of his adult life, Benjamin, a Consumer Reports autos writer, has kept a small fleet of high-mileage cars going.

PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEN SHMULEVITCH

issues. After all, there's plenty that can go wrong with a car that could, technically, be ignored if the car still starts and gets you to where you need to go. But neglecting small repairs and maintenance issues as they crop up is a bad habit that can shorten your car's life. I also put some effort into keeping my cars clean to protect against corrosion and to make them look nice.

John Ibbotson, Consumer Reports' chief mechanic, says, "It's not rocket science. If you take care of your car, it will take care of you."

Fred Hellrich, who lives in Annapolis, Md., says he has had several cars pass the 200,000-mile mark–and a couple of vehicles that made it more than 400,000 miles–everything from a Chevrolet van to a Toyota Tercel.

"It helps to get a good car to begin with," he says, echoing CR's long-standing advice to buy models with a strong track record for reliability. "That way you know it'll probably go pretty far if you take care of it."

Taking care of and holding on to a reliable car–rather than buying or leasing a new one every few years–is almost always a smart financial move. These days, though, with used-car prices more than 50 percent above pre-pandemic levels and the average new car price over $46,000, it may be especially smart to hang on to what you have.

Whatever your reasons–saving money, the comfort of familiarity, avoiding the worry of new car dings and scratches–it can be a rewarding experience to keep your car going. In the following pages, we tell you what to expect as your car ages, and how to make sure it becomes a 200,000-mile champ.

Cars That Go the Distance

WE'VE COMPILED the 10 top car brands for used vehicles, based on the current average reliability of their 2012 model lineup. We've also highlighted the most reliable 2012 model within each brand. For those in the market for a reasonably priced used vehicle, these are the winners. Our list points to the brands with cars that hold up over time and that you can rely on to get you to 200,000 miles with the fewest repair bumps.

LEXUS
CT 200h
BRAND RELIABILITY SCORE* **93**

TOYOTA
Prius C **86**

ACURA
TSX **79**

HONDA
Civic **70**

NISSAN
Altima **67**

MAZDA
Miata
BRAND RELIABILITY SCORE* **66**

VOLVO
S60 **54**

SUBARU
Legacy **50**

MERCEDES-BENZ
E-Class **47**

GMC
Canyon **42**

*Brand reliability score is the average for all models in automaker's 2012 lineup.

What to Expect on the Way to 200,000 Miles

AS YOUR CAR AGES, some parts are more likely to wear out at specific mileage benchmarks. Below, we show you the repairs and prices you can expect at various mileage intervals for a late-model Toyota RAV4, a popular small SUV. If your car is out of warranty, finding an independent shop you trust is likely to save you money.

0-36,000 MILES

DURING THIS TRADITIONAL warranty period, maintenance will be limited to regular oil changes, tire rotations, and inspecting the brakes, wipers, and tires for wear. You can save by replacing simple items yourself, such as wiper blades. Beyond wear items, the vehicle's various parts and systems will be under warranty, so you can go to the dealership for repairs.

TOYOTA RAV4 TYPICAL REPAIR COSTS

OIL CHANGE	$60
TIRE ROTATION	$60
WINDSHIELD WIPER BLADES	$60

36,000-60,000 MILES

YOUR CAR IS LIKELY to need tires during this time. Be sure to consult CR's expert tire reviews and ratings at **CR.org/tires**. Your brake pads, and maybe the rotors, could be nearing the end of their service life and should be checked and replaced, if necessary.

TIRES	$972
WHEEL ALIGNMENT (4 WHEELS)	$297
BRAKE PADS (PAIR)	$607

60,000-100,000 MILES

MOST VEHICLES are out of warranty at this point. Continue to monitor brakes and tires for wear, and pay closer attention to suspension parts, such as shock absorbers, struts, and bushings. It's best to replace suspension and brake parts in pairs, and be sure to get a four-wheel alignment when you buy new tires or have suspension parts replaced.

FRONT STRUTS (BOTH)	$979
REAR STRUTS (BOTH)	$600
CONTROL ARMS (BOTH)	$605

100,000-150,000 MILES

MAJOR SERVICES, such as timing-belt replacement, are typically needed, and you can expect items such as spark plugs, the starter, the alternator, and suspension parts to need replacing. "In theory, if you get that stuff replaced in the 100,000-to-150,000-mile range, the cycle starts again and you should be good for a while," Ibbotson says.

WATER PUMP ASSEMBLY	$748
SPARK PLUGS	$215
ALTERNATOR	$540

150,000-200,000 MILES

THIS IS WHEN YOUR CAR may need larger repairs, such as replacement of leaking engine oil seals, a transmission rebuild or replacement, a new exhaust system, or possibly a head gasket replacement. "The potential for big repairs goes up after 150,000 miles," Ibbotson says.

HEAD GASKET	$3,957
TRANSMISSION REPLACEMENT	$7,803
MUFFLER REPLACEMENT	$725

Source: 2020-21 RAV4 parts and labor pricing in the New York City metropolitan area, provided by CR, RepairPal (a CR partner), and SimpleTire.

How to Join the 200K Club

THE FIRST RULE of getting a car to 200,000 miles (and beyond) is to follow a maintenance plan. That's why automakers include a schedule in the owner's manual of every car they sell. Taking care of basics, such as timely oil changes and checkups, can uncover small problems before they metastasize into bigger, more expensive ones. Keeping your car clean, inside and out, helps prevent rust and damage to upholstery.

"Everything is interconnected, so when one part fails, it can put more strain on other parts, causing them to fail, too," Ibbotson says.

OIL CHANGES

Changing and topping off engine oil and transmission fluid—and differential oil for all-wheel-drive and four-wheel drive vehicles—are the bedrock of auto maintenance.

HOW OFTEN: Every 3,000 to 10,000 miles, depending on the model.

WHERE TO GO: A repair shop you trust. Avoid chain establishments because they might use cheap oil and filters.

AVERAGE PRICE RANGE: $30-$150.

SMART TIP: Use the type of oil recommended in the manual and don't splurge on synthetic unless the manual calls for it.

TIRE REPLACEMENT

Replace tires when the tread is thin or when they're older than 10 years. Rough roads and worn suspension parts on the car can cause tires to wear faster.

HOW OFTEN: It can be from 30,000 to 80,000 miles, depending on your car, the tire model, and your driving.

WHERE TO GO: Your usual trusted repair shop or a specialty tire shop.

AVERAGE PRICE RANGE: $556-$1,256.

SMART TIP: Properly inflated tires are safer and save gas. Check the doorjamb sticker for the proper pressure. It's also important to rotate tires every 5,000 to 8,000 miles to promote even wear.

BRAKES (DISCS/PADS)

Brakes won't last as long under frequent stop-and-go conditions or repeated hard braking. Front brakes tend to wear out faster than the rear ones because they provide most of the stopping power.

HOW OFTEN: 25,000 to 70,000 miles.

WHERE TO GO: A repair shop you trust.

AVERAGE PRICE RANGE: $249-$275.

SMART TIP: Driving evenly extends brake life and saves gas. Spend more for high-quality brake parts. Inexpensive pads wear quickly, and cheap rotors can more easily warp and cause vibrations when you're driving.

SPARK PLUGS

On most cars, spark plugs and other tuneup items aren't an issue until the 100,000-mile mark, Ibbotson says. Make sure to get the exact type recommended by the manufacturer. Incorrect plugs can wreck fuel economy and even cause engine damage.

HOW OFTEN: Typically, 100,000 miles.

WHERE TO GO: A repair shop you trust.

AVERAGE PRICE RANGE: $196-$251.

SMART TIP: When changing spark plugs, make sure the replacements are equivalent in quality to what came with the car to ensure proper performance. Your mechanic can advise you.

TIMING BELT

Not all cars have timing belts, but for those that do, follow manufacturer recommendations on replacement. The service can be expensive, but skipping it can result in major engine damage if a worn belt breaks.

HOW OFTEN: Usually every 60,000 to 100,000 miles.

WHERE TO GO: A repair shop you trust.

AVERAGE PRICE RANGE: $581-$746.

SMART TIP: It may make sense to replace the water pump, belt tensioners, and pulleys at the same time to save on future labor costs.

SHOCKS/ STRUTS

Shock absorbers and struts soak up road bumps and keep the car steady. Like brakes and tires, the life span of these suspension parts can depend on the quality of the roads where you drive.

HOW OFTEN: Shocks and struts can last 80,000 miles or more, but rough roads and aggressive driving can make them wear out faster.

WHERE TO GO: A repair shop you trust.

AVERAGE PRICE RANGE: $853-$928.

SMART TIP: High-quality parts will last longer than cheap ones. Be sure the shocks and struts you use meet manufacturer specifications.

BATTERIES

Batteries are typically maintenance-free and do their job well for years.

HOW OFTEN: Most batteries last from three to five years. Hot weather and letting the car sit for extended periods can shorten the battery's life.

WHERE TO GO: An auto parts store (many install free of charge) or a repair shop you trust. Check CR's ratings at **CR.org/carbattery**.

AVERAGE PRICE RANGE: $317-$328.

SMART TIP: Inspect your car battery periodically. If you see corrosion on the terminals or it looks like it's leaking, it's time to replace it.

EXHAUST SYSTEM/MUFFLER

Most cars come with a stainless steel exhaust system that lasts a long time. When it does wear out, it's probably at high mileage.

HOW OFTEN: When rust holes perforate the pipes or mufflers.

WHERE TO GO: A dependable shop that specializes in replacing exhaust systems and mufflers.

AVERAGE PRICE RANGE: $800-$834.

SMART TIP: Be sure to use quality exhaust parts. Cheap ones are more likely to corrode, so you'll have to pay labor costs for a replacement sooner.

The Benefits of Driving Hybrids

AUTOMAKERS ARE EMBRACING electric vehicles more than ever. But if you want to go green and aren't ready to buy a pure plug-in EV, fuel-efficient hybrids, which run on a combination of gas and electric power, are worthy alternatives. They emit fewer greenhouse gases and cost less to run than gas-only autos. They also recharge as they drive, so there's no need to plug in, and there's none of the range anxiety that can come with EVs. Hybrid owners also are more satisfied with their vehicles. For the models we tested that are offered in gas-only and hybrid versions, owner satisfaction was nearly 5 points higher, on average, for the hybrid version, according to our member survey results. The satisfaction score for the hybrid versions of the Ford Escape, Toyota Camry, and Hyundai—shown below—are greater than the 5-point average.

FORD ESCAPE

The base 1.5-liter conventional engine is powerful enough, but it vibrates too much at low engine speeds. The hybrid version of this SUV does away with that annoyance and delivers an impressive 34 mpg overall. Like CR members, our testers found the hybrid version to be the more compelling of the two. Smoother operation and 8 mpg better fuel efficiency are hard to beat.

BASE PRICE RANGE
$26,510-$39,185

DESTINATION CHARGE
$1,245

GAS		HYBRID
55	OVERALL SCORE	60
66	SATISFACTION	74
26	MPG	34

TOYOTA CAMRY

The regular four-cylinder Camry is quick and efficient, with a comfortable ride. But the hybrid is simply better. It gets a stunning 47 mpg overall, approaching Prius levels but in a larger, midsized sedan. Beyond that, the hybrid, which uses a continuously variable transmission, has a quieter and smoother powertrain, no doubt contributing to its higher owner satisfaction score.

BASE PRICE RANGE
$25,395-$35,820

DESTINATION CHARGE
$1,010

GAS		HYBRID
84	OVERALL SCORE	86
69	SATISFACTION	78
32	MPG	47

HYUNDAI SONATA

The Sonata's satisfaction score differential is huge, with the hybrid besting the gas-only version by 17 points. It boasts a significant 13 mpg overall advantage, but it didn't perform quite as well as the gas-powered model in our tests, in part due to bumpy shifts and slower acceleration. In our surveys, Sonata Hybrid owners may have prioritized fuel efficiency over those factors.

BASE PRICE RANGE
$24,150-$34,750

DESTINATION CHARGE
$1,045

GAS		HYBRID
83	OVERALL SCORE	80
68	SATISFACTION	85
31	MPG	44

ILLUSTRATION BY KIERSTEN ESSENPREIS

ROAD TEST

EXCLUSIVE RATINGS & REVIEWS
BASED ON TESTING AT CR'S
327-ACRE AUTO TEST CENTER

SPORTY CARS

Honda Civic Si

Bargain Fun, but a Rough Ride

72
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 74

HIGHS Handling, precise shifter, fuel economy, sensible controls

LOWS Stiff ride, noise, cabin access

POWERTRAIN 200-hp, 1.5-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder engine; 6-speed manual transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL 32 mpg on premium

PRICE $27,300 base price
+ $1,015 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $28,315

THE SI is the sporty model in the 11th-generation Civic lineup. It's a hoot to drive on curvy roads, thanks to precise handling and an eager powertrain, and it's a performance-car bargain. But it isn't as smooth, quiet, or refined—nor as quick—as the pricier Volkswagen Golf GTI.

The front-wheel-drive Si comes with a 200-hp turbo four-cylinder mated to a six-speed manual. There's no option for an automatic. After some initial turbo lag, the engine revs willingly, with an invigorating high-rpm note. But the real delight is the way the manual gearbox slots definitively from gear to gear.

Handling is even more enthusiastic than the powertrain, with quick, direct steering, minimal body lean, and lots of tire grip—it snaked through our avoidance maneuver with flying colors. But the Si's ride is too stiff; it feels choppy even on relatively smooth highways, and larger bumps punch straight through into the cabin. It's also very loud, due to a combination of elevated road noise and the drone from the 1.5-liter turbo engine. The Si's low stance makes it awkward to get in and out.

The well-bolstered, manually adjustable front seats hold occupants securely in place no matter how hard you take corners. They're comfortable, too, though some drivers pined for adjustable lumbar support. Neat details, such as the honeycomb dash vents, carry over from the regular Civic, as do the high-quality climate-control knobs. Unfortunately, some desirable features, such as heated seats, aren't available on the Si.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW, and LKA all come standard on the Si.

SPORTY CARS

Volkswagen Golf GTI

Sporty and Refined With Terrible Controls

67
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 85

HIGHS Handling, acceleration, braking, slick shifter, fuel economy

LOWS Confusing controls, below-average predicted reliability

POWERTRAIN 241-hp, 2.0-liter turbo 4-cylinder engine; 6-speed manual transmission; front-wheel drive

FUEL 28 mpg on regular

PRICE $29,545-$38,795 base price
+ $995 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $36,539

THE REDESIGNED Golf GTI ratchets up the performance over the outgoing version, while preserving the civility that has long made VW's sporty hatchback a refined daily driver. But the new infotainment system is a usability nightmare.

The GTI's turbo-four now produces 241 hp. It pulls strongly no matter what gear you're in and is accompanied by a baritone engine note. The six-speed manual shifter is nearly perfect, with such a light and precise feel that sometimes you find yourself shifting gears just for the heck of it.

With its quick steering and tied-down suspension, the GTI gobbles up corners with enthusiasm and poise—it feels like the driver is connected to the pavement. Some ride quality was sacrificed in the name of handling, but it doesn't beat you up like in the Honda Civic Si.

The cabin is nicely finished, and most versions come with plaid upholstery—an ode to the original Rabbit GTI from the early 1980s. The front seats have large side bolsters with grippy suede material that give fantastic lateral support. The hatchback body style makes for extra versatility, and rear-seat headroom is plentiful, though foot space underneath the front seats is tight.

But there's a huge gulf between the GTI's lusty driving experience and its frustrating infotainment system. Common tasks are packed into a confusing, slow-responding touch screen, and a lack of backlighting on the few touch-sensitive controls that remain makes it difficult during nighttime driving to adjust the climate temperature and audio volume.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, BSW, RCTW, LDW, and LKA all come standard.

PHOTOS: JOHN POWERS/CONSUMER REPORTS

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **FCW** forward collision warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

SMALL LUXURY CARS

Audi A3

Small Size With an Upscale Feel

76
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 83

HIGHS Handling, acceleration, braking, fuel economy, front-seat comfort, nice fit and finish

LOWS Tight rear seat

POWERTRAIN 201-hp, 2.0-liter turbo 4-cylinder engine; 7-speed dual-clutch automatic transmission; AWD

FUEL 31 mpg on regular

PRICE $34,800-$56,200 base price + $1,095 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $43,020

ALTHOUGH YOU won't mistake the A3 for Audi's quieter and more comfortable-riding higher-priced cars, it handily outscores entry-level competitors, such as the BMW 2 Series Gran Coupe, Cadillac CT4, and Mercedes-Benz CLA. This is due to its well-built cabin, sharp handling, and remarkable fuel economy.

If you enjoy picking up the pace on a twisty two-lane, the A3 could be the car for you. Our testers raved about the responsive steering and taut suspension that guided them smoothly through corners, and the strong tire grip that helped turn in impressively short stopping distances. The car's optional Sport suspension, however, delivered a ride bordering on too firm, though it's still more forgiving than its BMW and Mercedes competitors.

The 201-hp turbocharged four-cylinder is coupled with a seven-speed dual-clutch automatic, aided by a mild-hybrid setup that likely contributed to the car's class-leading 31 mpg overall. After a minor delay off the line, the engine provides decent power and the transmission shifts quickly and smoothly. The fuel-saving stop/start system shuts off the engine while you're coasting just before a complete stop at a red light—this isn't dangerous, but it can feel disconcerting the first time it happens.

As befitting an Audi, the front seats are comfortable and supportive. The rear seat is tight on headroom and knee room, as with most cars in the class. The controls and infotainment system are mostly user-friendly and have a high-quality feel.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, and LKA come standard, while BSW and RCTW are optional.

SUBCOMPACT SUVs

Toyota Corolla Cross

Sensible SUV That Feels Cheap

68
OVERALL SCORE

ROAD-TEST SCORE 67

HIGHS Fuel economy, braking, cabin access

LOWS Noisy, feels underpowered, lacks agility, mediocre fit and finish

POWERTRAIN 169-hp, 2.0-liter 4-cylinder engine; continuously variable transmission; all-wheel drive

FUEL 28 mpg on regular

PRICE $22,195-$27,625 base price + $1,215 destination charge
Total MSRP as tested $28,329

THE SMALLER, more affordable Corolla Cross is an alternative to the RAV4. It's fuel efficient and practical, and has easy-to-use controls. But the Cross also feels underpowered and becomes too noisy inside its cheap-looking cabin. In contrast, the Subaru Crosstrek offers a more pleasant driving experience for about the same money.

The Corolla Cross managed a respectable 28 mpg overall in our testing, 1 mpg shy of the Crosstrek. It's also easy to get in and out of, thanks to hip-height seats and wide doors. The elevated seating and large windows make for airy outward visibility, and there's good space for the driver.

Although the Cross delivers competitive acceleration numbers, it often feels like the engine struggles. Meanwhile, the continuously variable transmission's artificial "shifts" jolt the vehicle more than some regular automatics, and when pushed it exhibits the high-revving "rubberbanding" sensation that plagues many CVTs.

The suspension absorbs smaller road imperfections well, but large potholes strike through to the cabin. Handling is clumsy during regular driving, though it performed well in our avoidance maneuver, with an impressively high speed for the class. The test is designed to show how well a car can avoid an obstacle in the road.

The driver's seat has limited adjustments, and loses support and comfort during longer trips. The rear seat has ample headroom, but the bottom cushion is short on leg support.

FCW, AEB with pedestrian detection, LDW, and LKA come standard. BSW and RCTW come standard on the midlevel LE and up.

Safety Term Glossary: AEB automatic emergency braking; **BSW** blind spot warning; **FCW** forward collision warning; **LDW** lane departure warning; **LKA** lane keeping assistance; **RCTW** rear cross traffic warning.

Ratings › **Small but Mighty** We were mostly impressed with the three little sporty cars we tested this month. The Corolla Cross, on the other hand, is not so special.

Make & Model	Overall Score	Survey Results		Road-Test Results												Active Safety Features			
		Predicted reliability	Owner satisfaction	Road-test score	Overall mpg	Seat comfort, front/rear	Usability	Noise	Ride	Fit + finish	Routine handling	Avoidance-maneuver speed, mph	Acceleration, 0-60 mph, sec.	Dry braking, 60-0 mph, ft.	Suitcases + duffels/ Cargo volume, cu. ft.	FCW	AEB, pedestrian	AEB, highway	BSW
SUVs $20,000-$30,000																			
✓ **Subaru Crosstrek** 2.0L	86	⇈	↑	87	29	– / ↑	⇈	↑	↑	–	↑	54.5	10.2	125	27.5	O	O	O	O
✓ **Nissan Rogue Sport** 2.0L	77	⇈	⇊	72	26	↑ / –	⇈	↑	↑	–	↑	52.5	10.3	134	24.5	S	S	S	S
✓ **Chevrolet Trailblazer** 1.3T	76	⇈	↓	66	27	– / ↑	↑	–	–	–	–	54.0	9.5	133	24.0	S	S	–	O
✓ **Mazda CX-30** 2.5L	70	↑	–	64	27	↑ / –	–	–	–	↑	↑	54.0	8.7	133	21.5	S	S	S	O
✓ **Toyota Corolla Cross** 2.0L	68	–	↑	67	28	– / –	↑	–	–	–	–	58.0	9.3	128	26.0	S	S	S	O
✓ **Hyundai Kona** 2.0L	66	–	–	71	26	↑ / –	⇈	–	–	–	↑	56.0	11.1	129	22.5	S	S	O	O
Honda HR-V 1.8L	62	–	↓	66	29	↓ / ↑	⇈	↓	↓	–	↑	55.0	10.5	132	32.0	O	O	O	–
Chevrolet Trax 1.4T	61	⇈	⇊	55	25	– / –	–	–	↓	–	–	54.0	10.8	130	26.0	–	–	–	O
Volkswagen Taos 1.5T	55	↓	–	74	26	↑ / ⇈	↑	↑	–	–	↑	53.0	9.4	130	31.5	O	O	O	O
Kia Seltos 2.0L	43	⇊	↓	72	28	– / ↑	⇈	↓	↓	–	↑	55.0	9.0	128	28.0	S	S	S	O
SEDANS $35,000-$45,000																			
✓ **Volkswagen Arteon** 2.0T	82	–	–	91	24	↑ / ↑	⇈	↑	↑	↑	↑	53.5	7.9	125	4+1	S	S	S	S
✓ **Audi A3** 2.0T	76	–	↑	83	31	⇈ / ↓	↑	↑	–	↑	↑	55.5	6.8	120	2+0	S	S	S	O
✓ **Acura TLX** 2.0T	75	⇈	–	67	23	↑ / –	↓	–	↑	↑	↑	54.0	6.5	136	2+2	S	S	S	O
✓ **Genesis G70** 2.0T	73	–	↑	74	23	↑ / ⇊	↑	↑	↑	⇈	⇈	56.5	7.8	137	2+0	S	S	S	S
✓ **BMW 228i Gran Coupe** 2.0T	71	–	↑	75	27	⇈ / ↓	–	↑	–	↑	↑	51.0	7.2	132	2+2	S	S	O	S
✓ **Kia Stinger** 2.5T	70	–	–	75	23	⇈ / –	↑	↑	–	↑	⇈	53.5	7.5	132	3+0	S	S	S	S
Cadillac CT4 2.0T	58	↓	↓	78	25	⇈ / ↓	↑	↑	–	↑	⇈	55.0	7.4	129	2+1	S	S	O	S
Mercedes-Benz CLA250 2.0T	55	↓	–	65	27	↑ / ⇊	⇊	↑	↓	⇈	↑	56.0	6.6	131	2+2	S	S	S	S
Mercedes-Benz A220 2.0T	55	↓	–	64	27	↑ / ↓	⇊	↑	–	↑	↑	53.0	7.3	130	2+1	S	S	S	S
SPORTS CARS $25,000-$35,000																			
✓ **Mazda MX-5 Miata** 2.0L	85	⇈	⇈	80	34	– / –	–	⇊	↓	–	⇈	57.5	6.7	124	0+2	S	–	–	S
✓ **Honda Civic Si** 1.5T	72	–	↑	74	32	↑ / ↑	⇈	↓	↓	↑	⇈	57.5	7.3	134	3+1	S	S	S	O
Volkswagen Golf GTI 2.0T	67	↓	↑	85	28	↑ / –	⇊	↑	–	↑	⇈	56.0	6.4	127	1+3	S	S	S	S
Mini Cooper S 2.0T	65	↓	–	80	30	↑ / ⇊	–	–	–	↑	⇈	56.0	7.2	130	1+1	S	S	–	–

› Digital and All Access members can find the latest, complete ratings at CR.org/cars. When you're ready to buy, configure the vehicle and find the best price in your area by clicking the green "View Pricing Information" button on the model's dedicated page.

HOW WE TEST: Recommended models did well in our **Overall Score,** which factors in **road-test results, predicted reliability, owner satisfaction,** and **advanced safety,** which includes crash-test results and the availability of crash-prevention features, such as forward collision warning, automatic emergency braking, pedestrian detection, and blind spot warning. A dash (–) means no such safety system is offered; O means that it's optional on at least some trim levels; S means that the feature is standard on all trims. We deduct points if a model's gear selector lacks fail-safes to prevent the vehicle from rolling away.

Index

THIS INDEX LISTS ALL THE ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE MAGAZINE OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS (INCLUDING THIS ISSUE). FOR INDEXES COVERING THE PAST FIVE YEARS, GO TO CR.ORG/5YEARINDEX.

A

Air fryers ... Jul 21, 17; May 22, 18
  ratings ... May 22, 21
  root vegetable recipes ... Nov 21, 13
Air mattresses ... Jul 21, 14
Air purifiers ... Aug 21, 21
  ratings ... Aug 21, 25; Nov 21, 34
Air travel, COVID-19 safety ... Oct 21, 50
Alcohol-free drink recipes ... Jan 22, 17
Amazon Echo Show 10 speaker ... Aug 21, 17
Antennas, TV ... Dec 21, 16
Antibiotics, chain restaurant use ... Oct 21, 7; Feb 22, 7
Apple AirPods ... Mar 22, 14
Appliances
  Brand Reliability Rankings ... Aug 21, 48
  kitchen, space-saving ... May 22, 16
  replace or repair ... Aug 21, 42
  shopping for ... Aug 21, 46
Arbitration clauses ... Jun 21, 7

AUTOMOBILE RATINGS

Acura MDX ... Aug 21, 64
Audi A3 ... May 22, 58
Buick Envision ... Aug 21, 64
Cadillac Escalade ... Oct 21, 64
Chevrolet Bolt EUV ... Oct 21, 64
Chevrolet Corvette ... Sep 21, 64
Ford Bronco ... Mar 22, 60
Ford Bronco Sport ... Jul 21, 63
Ford F-150 ... Jun 21, 60
Ford Mustang Mach-E ... Aug 21, 63
Genesis G80 ... Jul 21, 64
Genesis GV70 ... Dec 21, 60
Genesis GV80 ... Jun 21, 60
Honda Civic ... Nov 21, 64
  Si ... May 22, 57
Hyundai Elantra Hybrid ... Oct 21, 63
Hyundai Ioniq ... Oct 21, 63
Hyundai Santa Cruz ... Jan 22, 60
Hyundai Santa Fe ... Jul 21, 64
  Hybrid ... Nov 21, 63
Hyundai Tucson ... Sep 21, 63
  Hybrid ... Nov 21, 63
Jeep Grand Cherokee L ... Dec 21, 60
Kia Carnival ... Sep 21, 64
Lexus NX ... Mar 22, 59
Mitsubishi Outlander ... Sep 21, 63
Nissan Frontier ... Feb 22, 60
Nissan Pathfinder ... Nov 21, 64
Nissan Rogue ... Jul 21, 63
Polestar 2 ... Aug 21, 63
Tesla Model S ... Feb 22, 60
Toyota Corolla Cross ... May 22, 58
Toyota Tundra ... Mar 22, 59
Volkswagen Golf GTI ... May 22, 57
Volkswagen ID.4 ... Mar 22, 60
Volkswagen Taos ... Jan 22, 60

AUTOMOBILES & AUTO EQUIPMENT

Automatic emergency braking ... Mar 22, 7
Batteries ... Jul 21, 62
Big trucks ... Jul 21, 56
Brand Report Card ... Apr 22, 14
Buying tips, new & used ... Apr 22, 22
Coming in 2022 ... Apr 22, 20
Deer season safety ... Oct 21, 17
Driver assistance systems
  crash data reporting ... Oct 21, 7
  safety ... Jul 21, 7
Driver monitoring systems ... Apr 22, 28
Efficiency ... May 22, 5
Electric vehicles ... Aug 21, 7; Apr 22, 32
Fuel economy ... Nov 21, 7
Gas-saving tips ... Apr 22, 99
Hybrids
  benefits of ... May 22, 56
  braking ... Jan 22, 59
Insurance
  fairness ... Jan 22, 7
  tips ... Aug 21, 62
Key fobs, replacing ... Oct 21, 62
Lease deals ... Nov 21, 17
Lending fairness ... Mar 22, 7
Loans ... Jan 22, 52
Make your car last ... May 22, 50
New cars
  fair deals ... Feb 22, 58
  reviews, 2022 ... Apr 22, 48
Older car care ... Mar 22, 58
Owner satisfaction ... Mar 22, 52
  brand ratings ... Mar 22, 57
Packing for travel ... Dec 21, 16
Ratings, 2022 ... Apr 22, 38
Rear-seat safety ... Feb 22, 52
  ratings ... Feb 22, 57
Reliability ... Jan 22, 46; Apr 22, 86
  predictions ... Jan 22, 50
  ratings ... Apr 22, 88
  brands ... Jan 22, 48
Repair
  dent repair ... Aug 21, 15
  DIY ... Oct 21, 50
  professional ... Oct 21, 56
  savings ... Jun 21, 52
RVs ... Aug 21, 16
Safety systems
  coming soon ... Aug 21, 56
Small trucks ... Nov 21, 62
Smart buys 2022 ... Apr 22, 16
SUV alternatives ... Dec 21, 59
Theft prevention ... Sep 21, 62
Tire sealants ... Jun 21, 59
Tires ... Dec 21, 54
  Goodyear G159 danger ... Sep 21, 56
  ratings ... Dec 21, 56
Top Picks for 2022 ... Apr 22, 8
Trucks timeline ... Jul 21, 14
Used cars ... Nov 21, 56; Apr 22, 82
  under $10,000 ... Nov 21, 61

B–D

Baby food safety ... Jan 22, 7
Backpacks for travel ... Feb 22, 17
Banking online ... Nov 21, 44
Bathroom scales ... Jun 21, 13
Blenders ... Aug 21, 17
Bluetooth speakers ... Jun 21, 24
Bouquets ... May 22, 14
Bread ... Oct 21, 36
  ratings ... Oct 21, 40
  timeline ... Oct 21, 14
Broadband internet ... Aug 21, 26; Oct 21, 7; Feb 22, 7
  provider ratings ... Aug 21, 35
Can openers, electric ... Mar 22, 16
Cell phone service plans ... Feb 22, 46
  ratings ... Feb 22, 50
Cereal ... Feb 22, 20
  ratings ... Feb 22, 22
Chicken
  contamination ... Sep 21, 48
  Costco ... Jan 22, 34
  timeline ... Jan 22, 14
Chocolate ... May 22, 12
  dark ... Feb 22, 42
    ratings ... Feb 22, 45
  timeline ... Feb 22, 14
Cleaning tips ... May 22, 11
  dishes ... Oct 21, 14
  pet hair ... Jan 22, 16
  stains ... Mar 22, 40
Cleaning tools ... May 22, 11
Clothing, moth protection ... Sep 21, 17
Cold remedies ... Mar 22, 17
Computers, desktop ... Sep 21, 15
COVID-19
  lessons learned ... Aug 21, 36
  recovery guide ... Jun 21, 36
  resuming normal activities ... Jul 21, 26
  safe air travel ... Oct 21, 50
  travel tips ... Oct 21, 50
Credit cards ... May 22, 44
Credit reports ... Sep 21, 7
Credit scores ... Jun 21, 16; Jul 21, 36
  apps ... Dec 21, 7
Dark chocolate ... Feb 22, 42
  ratings ... Feb 22, 45
Data privacy ... Jun 21, 7; Sep 21, 7
  dark patterns ... Jul 21, 7
  genetic testing kits ... Dec 21, 7
  Instagram ... Jul 21, 18
Decluttering your home ... Sep 21, 36
  Organizing ... May 22, 30
Desktop computers ... Sep 21, 15
Dips ... Jun 21, 15
Disaster preparedness ... Jul 21, 42
Dishes, hand-washing ... Oct 21, 14
Dishwashers
  ratings ... Sep 21, 34; Nov 21, 34
  shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Dollar stores ... Nov 21, 48
  shopping tips ... Nov 21, 54
Door locks ... Dec 21, 13
Dried fruit ... Dec 21, 17
Drugs, shopping online ... May 22, 22
Dumbbells ... Oct 21, 17

E–G

Earbuds
  Apple AirPods ... Mar 22, 14
  true wireless ... Jun 21, 20
E-bikes ... Mar 22, 46
  ratings ... Mar 22, 50
Electric can openers ... Mar 22, 16
Emails, unwanted ... Feb 22, 16
Entertaining guests ... Nov 21, 36
  timeline ... Nov 21, 14
Exercise mats ... Nov 21, 14
Fast food
  healthier breakfasts ... Dec 21, 14
  Mexican ... Mar 22, 18
Father's Day gifts ... Jun 21, 18
Financial tips during coronavirus
  credit scores ... Jun 21, 16
Fitness at home ... Sep 21, 42
Food safety ... May 22, 5
"Forever chemicals"
  in food packaging ... May 22, 36
  in water ... Jul 21, 7; Nov 21, 7
Furniture safety ... Jun 21, 7; Aug 21, 19; Sep 21, 7; Nov 21, 7; Mar 22, 30
Generator ratings ... Jul 21, 49; Nov 21, 35
Genetic testing privacy ... Dec 21, 7
Gift baskets ... Feb 22, 13
Gift cards ... Mar 22, 14
Gifts, Father's Day ... Jun 21, 18
Green timeline ... Sep 21, 14
Grills ... Jun 21, 24
  ratings ... Jun 21, 34
Grocery delivery services ... Jul 21, 15

H–K

Headphones, noise-canceling ... Jun 21, 20
  ratings ... Jun 21, 23
Healthy eating ... Jan 22, 32
Hearing aids ... Dec 21, 48
  problems & fixes ... Jun 21, 14
Heating system reliability ... Feb 22, 15
Holiday lights ... Dec 21, 15
Home inspections ... Feb 22, 38
Home organizing ... May 22, 30
  and recycling ... Sep 21, 36
  timeline ... May 22, 12
Home refinancing ... Feb 22, 41
Home revival guide ... Nov 21, 26
Home safety ... Mar 22, 24
Homebuying ... Feb 22, 34
Hot wings, cooking at home ... Jul 21, 17
Humidifiers ... Oct 21, 13; Dec 21, 20
  ratings ... Dec 21, 23
Infant sleep product safety ... Aug 21, 7; Dec 21, 7; Mar 22, 31; May 22, 5
Insect repellents ... Jul 21, 21
  ratings ... Jul 21, 24
Insurance fairness ... Jan 22, 7
Interior paints
  disposal ... Sep 21, 41
  ratings ... Nov 21, 35
Kitchen fire safety ... Nov 21, 16
Kitchen upgrades ... Sep 21, 26
  appliances ... Sep 21, 32
    shopping ... Aug 21, 46
    space-saving ... May 22, 16
  countertops ... Sep 21, 30
    material ratings ... Sep 21, 35
  flooring ... Sep 21, 31
    ratings ... Sep 21, 35
  lighting ... Sep 21, 29
  storage ... Sep 21, 27
Knives ... Jan 22, 13
  sharpening ... Jun 21, 17

L–P

Laundry
  cost savings ... Sep 21, 22
  green washer ratings ... Sep 21, 25
Lawn care
  tools, battery-powered ... Jul 21, 19
Mattress ratings ... Feb 22, 32
Meat safety tips ... Sep 21, 53
Microwaves, shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Milk, labeling ... Aug 21, 18
Milk frothers ... Mar 22, 13
Mixer attachments ... Sep 21, 16
Online banking ... Nov 21, 44
Outdoor fun ... Jun 21, 24
Outdoor rugs ... Aug 21, 14
Package theft prevention ... Mar 22, 16
Paints, interior, ratings ... Nov 21, 35
Peloton ... Sep 21, 45
Pet trackers ... May 22, 15
Photography tips, smartphone cameras ... Jul 21, 50
Pillows
  adjustable ... Sep 21, 13
  ratings ... Feb 22, 33
Pizza ovens ... Nov 21, 18
Plastics ... Oct 21, 42
  recycling ... Oct 21, 44
Prescriptions, shopping online ... May 22, 22
Price matching ... Jan 22, 15
Printers ... Jan 22, 20
  ratings ... Jan 22, 22
Product safety ... Jun 21, 44
Projectors ... Jun 21, 24

R–S

Ranges
  ratings ... Sep 21, 34
  shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Recalls, urging reforms ... Aug 21, 7
Refrigerators
  ratings ... Sep 21, 33
  shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Rice, stovetop cooking ... Feb 22, 18
Right to repair ... Sep 21, 7; Mar 22, 7
Robocalls ... Jan 22, 7
Rugs, outdoor ... Aug 21, 14
RVs ... Aug 21, 16
  Goodyear G159 tire danger ... Sep 21, 56
Salad ... Aug 21, 50
  dressings
    labeling ... Aug 21, 53
    ratings ... Aug 21, 54
  timeline ... Aug 21, 14
Salmonella in chicken ... Sep 21, 48
Scales, bathroom ... Jun 21, 13
Scams ... Mar 22, 34
  prevention ... Mar 22, 38
  timeline ... Mar 22, 14
Self-care ... Jan 22, 24
Sheet pans ... Feb 22, 14
Shopping tips ... Oct 21, 26
Sink filters ... Jan 22, 18
Sleep ... Feb 22, 24
  mattress ratings ... Feb 22, 32
  pillow ratings ... Feb 22, 33
  trackers ... Jan 22, 40
Smart thermostats ... Jan 22, 14
Smartphones
  camera ratings ... Jul 21, 54
  contactless payments ... Nov 21, 14
  if lost ... May 22, 13
  photo tips ... Jul 21, 21
  ratings ... Jul 21, 54
  service plans ... Feb 22, 46
    ratings ... Feb 22, 50
Snack bars ... Sep 21, 18
Snow blower problems & solutions ... Dec 21, 18
Sound systems ... Oct 21, 15
Soundbars ... Mar 22, 20
  ratings ... Nov 21, 34; Mar 22, 23
Speakers, Bluetooth ... Jun 21, 24; Aug 21, 17
Spices
  DIY ... Dec 21, 46
  heavy metals in ... Dec 21, 38; Feb 22, 7
    safety ratings ... Dec 21, 42
Stain guide ... Mar 22, 40
Student loans, resuming payments ... Sep 21, 17
Sunscreens ... Jul 21, 21
  ratings ... Jul 21, 23

T–W

Tablets, bargain ... Jun 21, 16
Tea ... Feb 22, 16
Thermostats, smart ... Jan 22, 14
Toaster oven cooking ... Oct 21, 16
Top product picks ... Dec 21, 24
  timeline ... Dec 21, 14
Travel ... Oct 21, 50
Treadmills
  ratings ... Sep 21, 47
TVs ... Nov 21, 20
  antennas ... Dec 21, 16
  ratings ... Nov 21, 24
  shopping for ... Jul 21, 16; Nov 21, 22
Under-sink filters ... Jan 22, 18
Unwanted emails ... Feb 22, 16
Vacuums ... Oct 21, 20; May 22, 11
  ratings ... Oct 21, 24
Washers, green ... Sep 21, 20
  ratings ... Sep 21, 25
  shopping ... Aug 21, 46
Water
  "forever chemicals" in ... Jul 21, 7
  home tap, under-sink filters ... Jan 22, 18
Webcams ... Aug 21, 13
Wellness ... Jan 22, 24
WiFi ... Aug 21, 30
  extenders ... Aug 21, 17
  mesh routers ... Aug 21, 17

Supermarket Madness

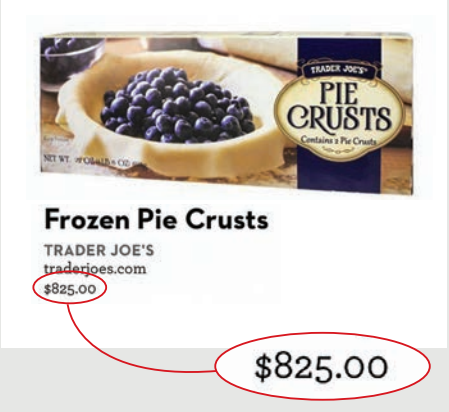
If these signs are to be believed, strange things are happening at stores this spring

Something Stinks

Think skipping your a.m. shower is responsible for that odor in the produce aisle? Blame the smelly durian fruit instead.
Submitted by Eric, via email

Good Thing They Have 9 Lives

Cat lovers may want to skip this section.
Submitted by Travis McCann, Sacramento, CA



A Very Pricey Pie

This is a pretty flaky amount to pay for a frozen crust.
Submitted by Rosemary Brining, via email

Penny Wise, Pounds Foolish

You'd have to eat a whole lot of ice cream for these savings to add up.
Submitted by John Turowski, Pasadena, MD

SHARE

Be on the lookout for goofs and glitches like these. Share them with us—by email at **SellingIt@cro.consumer.org** or by mail to Selling It, Consumer Reports, 101 Truman Ave., Yonkers, NY 10703—and we might publish yours. Please include key information, such as your name and location.

JAN	APR	JUL	OCT
FEB	MAY	AUG	NOV
MAR	JUN	SEP	DEC

Know When to Shop and Get the Best Deal

Use our digital Best Time to Buy calendar to buy everything from vacuums to grills.

BEST TIME TO BUY

Check it out for FREE at:
cr.org/nsbesttime

CR Consumer Reports